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ROMA SOTTERRANEA

OR

AN ACCOUNT OF THE ROMAN CATACOMBS

ESPECIALLY OF THE

CEMETERY OF ST. CALLIXTUS

COMPILED FROM THE WORKS OF COMMENDATORE DE ROSSI WITH THE CONSENT OF THE AUTHOR

New Edition, Rewritten and Greatly Enlarged

BY

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"Vix fama nota est, abditis
Quam plena sanctis Roma sit,
Quam dives urbanum solum
Sacris sepulchris floreat"
—PRUDENTIUS

PART SECOND: CHRISTIAN ART

LONDON
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1879
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PREFACE.

THE task which we have undertaken is now accomplished. We have placed within the reach of English readers as complete an account of the Roman Catacombs and their contents, more especially of the Catacomb of St. Callixtus, as we have been able to collect from the works of Commendatore De Rossi. The present Part treats of ancient Christian art, on which it gives far more abundant information than has ever before appeared in the English language. This subject occupied only 130 pages, and was illustrated by 25 engravings, in our first edition. In the present edition it fills 360 pages, and receives more than 120 illustrations. The additional matter is, in the main, a mere record of facts. Future authors may combine, compare, and generalise these facts afresh, but it was first necessary that they should be collected. And we have spared no pains to make our collection as complete as possible, and to give our readers as fair an idea as we can of the originals.

Exception has been taken to some of the illustrations in our first edition, which yet will be found repeated in the present volume. We owe it therefore to ourselves and to our readers to explain that our chromo-lithographs have been executed in Rome under the superintendence of De Rossi himself, and that both these and most of the woodcuts are mere reproductions, on a smaller scale, of some of the most valuable illustrations of his own magnificent

volumes. We cannot do better, therefore, than quote his account of the principles by which he has been guided. "Great care has been taken," he says,[1] "to reproduce faithfully the style and character of the ancient paintings, and we have followed the method that is most approved in archæological publications of this kind. The pictures are represented just as they appear to a man who examines them attentively after having revived the colours by means of a little moisture. But we have avoided giving unnecessary annoyance to the eye of the spectator, and destroying the character of the painting, by marking in dark tints all the holes or other accidental disfigurements which have happened to the fresco in the course of so many centuries. The only result of this would be that the painting would come out a mass of black spots, smothered, as it were, in a tempest of darkness. On the other hand, nothing has been supplied; the plaster is represented as damaged, only I have indicated the spots very lightly, in order that this external and accidental damage might not alter the original features of these venerable paintings; and the colours which are here and there lost are represented as they appear to-day in the originals."

Some few of our illustrations are taken from Bosio and Aringhi, and the still unfinished work of P. Garrucci upon the History of Christian art. We cannot speak so confidently of the trustworthiness of these, considered as copies of the original paintings; but they may be trusted for the purpose for which they are used in the text.

May 1879.

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[1] Imagines selectæ Deiparæ Virginis in cœmeteriis suburbanis udo depictæ. Romæ, 1863. Præfat.

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LIST

OF

CHROMO-LITHOGRAPH PLATES.

Plate		Facing page
Frontispiece.	—Photograph of small Sarcophagus, representing St. Peter as Moses (see pp. 246, 315), ...	*Title*
XII.	Ceiling in Chamber Y of *Area* of Lucina—Second Century,	18
XIII.	Arch of *Arcosolium* in St. Callixtus'—Third Century, . .	54
XIV.	Chamber of the *Cinque Santi* in St. Soteris—Fourth Century,	54
XV.	Chamber *dei Sacramenti* in St. Callixtus—Third Century, .	60
XVI.	1. From Chamber Y of *Area* I.; 2, 3. From Chamber *dei Sacramenti*, ...	66
XVII.	From Chamber *dei Sacramenti*, ...	68
XVIII.	1, 3, 4. From Chamber *dei Sacramenti;* 2. Orpheus, .	86
XIX.	From Chamber *dei Sacramenti*, ...	100
XX.	1. From St. Priscilla; 2. From SS. Peter and Marcellinus,	140
XXI.	1. Bronze Medallion of SS. Peter and Paul; 2. Glass of St. Peter as Moses, ...	310
XXII.	Gilded Glasses from the Catacombs, ...	312
XXIII.	Large Sarcophagus in Lateran Museum (see pp. 242–247), .	316

LIST OF WOOD ENGRAVINGS.

Fig.		Page
1.	Ceiling of Chamber A_3 in our Plan of St. Callixtus',	19
2.	Antique Statue of Hermes-Kriophorus, from Wilton House,	28
3.	Statue of Good Shepherd, from Christian Museum at the Lateran,	29
4.	Ceiling, from a Chamber in Catacomb of Domitilla,	31
5.	Psyche, in an outer Cubiculum of the Cemetery of Domitilla,	33
6.	Different forms of Anchor on Epitaphs in the Catacombs,	52
7.	Epitaph of Faustinianus, with Anchor, Dove, and Lamb,	53
8.	Painting of Sheep, from Chamber in Crypt of Lucina,	53
9.	Painting of Doves, from the same Chamber,	54
10.	Epitaph with Anchor and Fish, from Prætextatus',	61
11.	Painting from a Catacomb at Alexandria, symbolical of the Holy Eucharist,	71
12.	Epitaph of Syntrophion, with Fish and Bread,	74
13.	Lamb carrying Milk-Pail, from SS. Peter and Marcellinus,	75
14.	Milk-Pail and Shepherd's Crook, with Lamb, from St. Domitilla,	75
15.	Lamb carrying Milk-Pail, from St. Priscilla,	76
16.	Stags Drinking, from St. Callixtus',	81
17.	Boat, laden with Vessels (Souls), guided by the Holy Spirit,	82
18.	Different forms of Vessels on Gravestones in the Catacombs,	83
19.	Plan of Papal Crypt, St. Cecilia, and Chapels of the Sacraments,	85
20.	Sketch of Walls of one of the Chambers of the Sacraments,	87
21.	The Raising of Lazarus, from SS. Peter and Marcellinus,	100
22.	The Same, from St. Callixtus',	100
23.	Plan of the Gallery, with Chambers of the Sacraments,	103
24.	Noe in the Ark,	105
25.	Moses taking off his Shoes, and Moses striking the Rock,	108
26.	Painting of Vine on Roof of most ancient part of St. Domitilla,	121
27.	Fragment of Daniel in the Lions' Den, from the same,	123
28.	Two Guests at a Feast, from the same,	124
29.	A Feast, from SS. Peter and Marcellinus—Aringhi,	129
30.	Another Feast, from the same Cemetery—Bosio,	130
31.	The Baptism of our Lord, from the Crypts of Lucina,	132
32.	Gravestone with Orante and Sheep, from St. Callixtus',	137
33.	Arcosolium in St. Priscilla, with Madonna and Child,	139

Fig.		Page
34.	Our Lord with the Woman of Samaria, from Prætextatus',	145
35.	Hæmorrhoissa touching the hem of our Lord's garment, from the same,	146
36.	Striking our Lord's Head with a Reed, from the same,	146
37.	Ceiling of Crypt of St. Januarius, from the same,	148
38, 39, 40.	Borders of three other sides of Crypt, representing the Seasons,	149
41.	Vine Ornament of Fourth Century, from St. Callixtus',	151
42.	Vine Ornament on Tomb of Galla Placidia at Ravenna,	152
43.	The Ship of Jonas, in one of the Sacramental Chambers,	154
44.	Two *Oranti* of unusual size, on a Tomb of the Third Century,	156
45.	Painting of Five Saints, in a Chamber of St. Soteris,	158
46.	Family Group (apparently), in Cemetery of St. Soteris,	162
47.	Ornamentation of the same Tomb,	162
48.	An Emblem of Spring, from St. Callixtus',	163
49.	An Emblem of Summer, from the same,	163
50.	Ornament of an Arcosolium in Area IX. of St. Callixtus',	164
51.	Disguised Representation of the Cross in same Arcosolium,	165
52.	Ornament of Arcosolium in Area X. of St. Callixtus',	165
53.	Painting on the Tomb of a Seller of Vegetables,	166
54.	Ceiling of a Chamber in St. Callixtus'—Third or Fourth Century,	167
55.	Three Children in Fiery Furnace, from St. Hermes—Bosio,	168
56.	Four Wise Men offering Gifts, from St. Domitilla,	169
57.	Two Wise Men offering Gifts, from SS. Peter and Marcellinus,	170
58.	Susanna and the Elders, from St. Callixtus',	171
59.	Ceiling of Cubiculum of St. Eusebius in St. Callixtus',	175
60.	Good Shepherd on Arcosolium in Generosa,	177
61.	Good Shepherd, two Apostles, and Water from the Rock, in St. Callixtus',	179
62.	Moses taking off his Shoes, and Moses striking the Rock, in one picture in same Chamber,	180
63.	Earliest instance of the Monogram on an Arcosolium in St. Callixtus',	183
64.	Different Forms of the Cross and Monogram,	186
65.	The Wise and Foolish Virgins, in St. Cyriaca,	191
66, 67.	Denial of St. Peter, and Gathering of Manna, in the same,	193
68.	Painting of Veneranda and St. Petronilla, in SS. Nereus and Achilleus,	196
69.	Painting with Nimbus, in Liberian region of St. Callixtus',	198
70.	The Three Children in the Fiery Furnace, in St. Soteris,	201
71.	Ceiling with floriated Crosses, in Chamber of Redemptus,	203
72.	Our Lord in glory with Saints, from SS. Peter and Marcellinus,	204
73.	Resurrection of Lazarus, in St. Callixtus'—Fifth Century,	207
74.	Three Saints in Shaft of Crypt of St. Cecilia—Fifth Century,	208
75.	Fresco of St. Cecilia in her Crypt,	209
76.	Fresco of Seventh Century in Cemetery of Generosa,	211

Fig.		Page
77.	Painting of SS. Sixtus and Optatus (?) near St. Cornelius—Ninth Century,	213
78.	Bust of our Lord in St. Pontianus—Ninth Century,	214
79.	The earliest Portrait of Christ, in St. Domitilla—after Kügler,	218
80.	The same, as copied by Mr. Heaphy,	219
81.	Our Lord and the Hæmorrhoissa, on a Sarcophagus,	221
82.	Bust of our Lord in Crypt of St. Cecilia,	223
83.	Bust of our Lord, from St. Pontianus—Bosio,	224
84.	Bust of our Lord, from Neapolitan Catacombs,	225
85.	The Blessed Virgin and Isaias, from St. Priscilla,	226
86.	The Blessed Virgin and Child, from St. Domitilla,	227
87.	The Blessed Virgin and Child, from St. Agnes' (Ostrianum),	227
88.	Fragment of dated Sarcophagus with Nativity,	235
89.	Tombstone of a Christian Sarcophagus-maker,	236
90.	Very ancient Sarcophagus, in Crypt of Lucina,	238
91.	Small Sarcophagus of Longlianus, in St. Callixtus',	238
92.	Sarcophagus with Cupid and Psyche, from St. Callixtus',	239
93.	Sarcophagus with Ulysses and Sirens, in Crypt of Lucina,	240
94.	Sarcophagus still containing a body, in St. Callixtus',	240
95.	Part of Sarcophagus of Paulina, with Shepherds,	241
96.	Part of Sarcophagus with Orpheus,	242
97.	Lid of Sarcophagus of Primitiva,	248
98.	Sarcophagus with Jonas, &c., from Crypt of St. Peter,	249
99.	Sarcophagus with Shepherds and Sheep with *coronæ*,	250
100.	Sarcophagus with Cain and Abel, St. Mary Magdalene, &c.,	250
101.	Fine Sarcophagus, from St. Paul's,	252
102.	Sarcophagus with the Labarum and the Passion,	253
103.	Sarcophagus with our Lord and the Apostles, &c., from St. Paul's,	255
104.	Sculpture representing the Ascent of Elias into Heaven,	257
105.	Sarcophagus with Nativity, from Aringhi,	258
106.	Spandrils on the Sarcophagus of Junius Bassus,	261
107.	Statue of St. Hippolytus—Third Century,	263
108.	Bone Toy-Leopard, in Arenarium of Hippolytus,	271
109.	Marble Monogram found in St. Agnes',	276
110.	Ivory Cover of Diptych, in Arenarium of Hippolytus,	279
111.	Ivory Finial, from the Catacombs,	280
112.	Ivory Medallion of our Lord, from St. Domitilla,	281
113.	Glass Bowl, with Fish on outside, in St. Callixtus',	285
114.	Specimens of Gallo-Roman Glass and Pottery,	295
115.	Specimens of Merovingian Pottery and Glass,	295
116.	Gilded Glass representing Marriage,	303
117.	Gilded Glass with Biblical Subjects,	304
118.	Bust of St. Callixtus on Gilded Glass,	305
119.	Busts of SS. Peter and Paul on Gilded Glass,	311
120.	St. Peter as Moses on Gilded Glass,	314
121.	Our Lord and the Apostles, &c., on Gilded Glass,	317

Fig.		Page
122.	Part of Engraving on Glass Plate, from Podogoritza,	319
123.	Fragments of a Glass Patena found at Cologne,	320
124.	Phials with traces of Blood in them—Boldetti,	333
125.	Glass Bottle containing Blood, found in 1872,	335
126.	Caricature of the Crucifixion on Wall of Palace of Cæsars,	346
127.	Ancient Gem of Donkey Teaching, probably in Ridicule of Christianity,	347
128.	Medal of Alexander the Great, with Christian Inscription,	351

CONTENTS.

BOOK I.

PRELIMINARY DISSERTATIONS.

Page

CHAPTER I.—The Antiquity of Early Christian Art.—Opinions of Catholic theologians of sixteenth and seventeenth centuries on the antiquity of Christian art, corrected by modern discoveries — Opinions of D'Agincourt, Raoul-Rochette, and others—De Rossi's judgment, founded on the chronology of the Catacombs, confirmed by independent opinions of competent art critics, *e.g.*, Müller and Kügler, ... 3

CHAPTER II. — The Relations of Christian and Pagan Art.—General points of resemblance between ancient Christian and contemporary Pagan art—Theory of their relations according to Raoul-Rochette, founded on imperfect knowledge; examined in detail—The Good Shepherd—Orpheus—Psyche—Personifications of the seasons, rivers, and other natural objects—Relations of Christian and Pagan art according to De Rossi, ... 17

CHAPTER III.—Symbolical Character of Early Christian Art.—Christian teaching and Christian art, both eminently symbolical—Interpretation of artistic symbols sometimes difficult—Instances of misinterpretation—Canons to be observed to secure correct interpretation, ... 39

BOOK II.

SUBJECTS OF PAINTINGS IN THE CATACOMBS.

CHAPTER I.—Symbolical Paintings.—Two modes of arranging the paintings, according to age or subject—The latter taken first —Symbolical paintings—Meaning of some symbols universally agreed upon—Anchor—Lamb—Dove—Fish—Instances of the fish in combination with bread, as symbolical of the Holy Eucharist—Milk, a symbol of the same—Testimonies of the Fathers to this interpretation—Dolphin—Stag—Ship—Amphoræ, 50

Page

CHAPTER II. — LITURGICAL PAINTINGS. — Specimen of symbolical paintings, illustrating the Sacraments of Baptism and the Holy Eucharist, executed in the third century—General description of them—Explained by the writings of Tertullian and others —Moses striking the rock—Fisherman—Act of Baptism—Paralytic carrying his bed—Bread and fish—Act of consecration—Feast of seven disciples by Lake of Tiberias—Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac—Resurrection of Lazarus—Other liturgical scenes elsewhere—Union of some subjects in later paintings more historical than symbolical, ... 84

CHAPTER III.—BIBLICAL PAINTINGS.—Biblical subjects treated symbolically, not according to historical truth—Noe's ark typical of the Church and the waters of Baptism—Jonas, of the Resurrection—Question of the gourd, or ivy—Form of the fish taken from the story of Andromeda—Daniel in the lions' den—Three Children in the fiery furnace—Adoration of the Wise Men—Moses striking the rock—Resurrection of Lazarus, ... 104

BOOK III.

THE PAINTINGS CHRONOLOGICALLY ARRANGED.

CHAPTER I.—THE PAINTINGS OF THE FIRST TWO CENTURIES. —Chronology of the frescoes, how determined—Some of Apostolic or quasi-Apostolic antiquity, *e.g.* (1) in the Cemetery of Domitilla—The vine, fisherman, Daniel, Noe, banquet of fish and bread; (2) in Crypts of Lucina—Baptism of our Lord, Jonas, fish and bread, the Orante; (3) in Cemetery of Priscilla—Our Blessed Lady—the Holy Family, the Annunciation; (4) in Prætextatus'—The Samaritan woman, the Hæmorrhoissa, the crowning with thorns—Paintings of second century, in Crypt of St. Januarius—The Seasons, Jonas, Moses striking the rock, the Good Shepherd, ... 117

CHAPTER II.—PAINTINGS OF THE THIRD CENTURY.—Development of Christian art—Combination of subjects and composition —Examples: Fisherman—Jonas and the ship—The rock—The Orante, individualised and named—Examples—Family groups—Scenes from civil life—Masks and other ornaments of Pagan art—Biblical subjects still retained—Three Children in fiery furnace—Daniel in the lions' den—Susanna and the Elders—Scene from the trial of a martyr, ... 153

CHAPTER III.—PAINTINGS OF THE FOURTH CENTURY.—A remarkable painting of the Good Shepherd in Catacomb of St. Callixtus examined in detail—Scenes from the life of Moses, and

Page

multiplication of the loaves and fishes—The old subjects continued, but treated less symbolically—Paintings of the Liberian area of San Callisto, much defaced in consequence of bad quality of the plaster—First appearance in painting of the monogram—Different forms of it—First appearance of the nimbus—Its meaning, and history of its use—Parable of wise and foolish virgins—Denial of our Lord by St. Peter—The manna—Martyrs or other saints welcoming the deceased to heaven—Conjectural interpretation of a singular painting in San Callisto—The Three Children in the fiery furnace accompanied by the Angel of the Lord—Gradual disuse of painting, first of the chambers, and then of the tombs, ... 176

CHAPTER IV.—The Fifth and Following Centuries.—Paintings in the Catacombs in the fifth and sixth centuries extremely rare—An example or two given—A specimen of the seventh century from Cemetery of Generosa—And of the ninth from San Callisto—Portraits of our Blessed Lord—Conclusion, . 206

BOOK IV.

EARLY CHRISTIAN SCULPTURE.

CHAPTER I.—Christian Sarcophagi.—Christian sculpture almost confined to sarcophagi—Christians used sarcophagi in Apostolic times—St. Petronilla—Reasons why Christian sculpture was rare in time of persecution—Christians selected unobjectionable subjects by Pagan sculptors—Pastoral scenes: Ulysses and Sirens, Orpheus, &c.—Sarcophagi in Lateran Museum—Explanation of large sarcophagus—Statues of Good Shepherd, Jonas, Noe, &c.—Cain and Abel—Sheep with bread—Labarum and scenes from Passion—Agapæ—Christ in glory—Elias—Nativity—Sarcophagus of Junius Bassus, with allegorical figures of lambs—Statue of Hippolytus: his Paschal Canon, ... 232

BOOK V.

OBJECTS FOUND IN THE CATACOMBS.

CHAPTER I.—Miscellaneous Objects Found in the Catacombs.—Variety of objects found in the Catacombs, classified by De Rossi. 1. Personal ornaments—Cameos and precious stones, rings, necklaces, bracelets, bullæ. 2. Toys—Dice, children's playthings. 3. Tesseræ of various kinds—Labels for slaves. 4. Domestic utensils—made of precious stones, marble, ivory, and bone—Covers of tablets and diptychs—Ivories with Christian emblems on them—Articles formed of gold, silver, bronze, glass,

Page

and enamel—Remarkable glass bowl—glass phials—Terra-cotta work, amphoræ. 5. Coins and medals. 6. Articles belonging to tombs—Lamps, their number and variety—Ampullæ, their form —Instruments of torture, ... 266

CHAPTER II.—GILDED GLASSES FOUND IN THE CATACOMBS.—Gilded Glasses in various Museums—Description of them—Their manufacture and date—Subjects depicted on them: Pagan, social and domestic; Jewish, but most frequently Christian—Description of some of them—Christ, the Blessed Virgin, the Saints—SS. Peter and Paul: a very frequent subject—Their feast at Rome—Ancient portraits of these Apostles—St. Peter under the type of Moses on glasses, sculpture, and paintings, proofs and illustrations of this—Remarkable glass recently brought from Dalmatia—Large patenæ with small medallions let into the glass, example found at Cologne—Glass chalices—Use of glass patenæ, 298

CHAPTER III.—PURPOSE AND CHRONOLOGICAL VALUE OF THESE VARIOUS ARTICLES.—Purpose for which these articles were placed in the Catacombs—Theories of Severano, Boldetti, Marangoni, and Buonarroti—Untenable theory of Raoul-Rochette—Buonarroti probably correct in thinking these objects sign-posts —Pagan ornament on them accounted for—Chronological value of these articles—Conclusion of De Rossi, ... 325

CHAPTER IV.—THE BLOOD-STAINED PHIALS FOUND IN THE CATACOMBS.—Blood of Martyrs carefully preserved—Often in vessels of glass and terra-cotta—These vessels often found in Catacombs by Boldetti, Marangoni, &c.—Remarkable case of liquid blood in a glass phial found in 1872—Chemical and microscopical analysis—Importance of this analysis—Testimony of F. Marchi, of Leibnitz—Decree of Sacred Congregation of Relics in 1668—Renewed in 1863—Vessels stained red with wine—P. de Büch's theory of Eucharistic or Agape wine untenable—Some ampullæ contained balsam—General conclusion, . . . 330

APPENDIX.

NOTE A.—Blasphemous Caricature of Crucifixion, ... 345
NOTE B.—A Mithraic Burial-place connected with the Catacomb of Prætextatus, ... 353
NOTE C.—The Good Shepherd, Christian and Pagan, . . . 356
NOTE D.—Anecdote illustrating De Rossi's intimate knowledge of the Chronology of the Catacombs, ... 358
NOTE E.—Treatment of Pagan Art under the Christian Emperors, . 360
NOTE F.—Calls attention to a discrepancy between pages 221 and 256, 361

PART II.

EARLY CHRISTIAN ART.

BOOK I.

PRELIMINARY DISSERTATIONS.

CHAPTER I.

THE ANTIQUITY OF EARLY CHRISTIAN ART.

Opinions of Catholic Theologians of sixteenth and seventeenth centuries on the antiquity of Christian Art, corrected by modern discoveries—Opinions of D'Agincourt, Raoul Rochette, and others—De Rossi's judgment, founded on the chronology of the Catacombs, confirmed by independent opinions of competent art-critics, e.g., *Müller and Kügler.*

The antiquity of Christian Art, a subject mixed up with religious controversy,

THE subject of early Christian Art has been unhappily the battlefield of such religious disputes, that it is hard to gain an impartial hearing for any history that may be given of the ancient decorations of the Roman Catacombs. And this difficulty has increased rather than diminished in the last quarter of a century, because many of the paintings that have been discovered during that period have been assigned by competent judges to a very high antiquity, whilst some of them seem to require for their complete interpretation an acceptance of certain definite Christian dogmas. It is necessary therefore for all writers, whether Catholic or Protestant, to keep strict watch over themselves in handling this topic, lest their religious prejudices should unconsciously warp their judgment.

yet unnecessarily so, as Art is an accessory of devotion, and therefore subject to change.

In justice, however, to Catholic writers, it ought to be remembered that they are under no temptation to exaggerate the testimony of antiquity in favour of their own practice, since the use of religious pictures and images belongs to the class of things which are in themselves indifferent. They are in no way essential, and do not touch the substance of religion. They are therefore the subject of positive law, and questions concerning them may be settled, sometimes in this way, sometimes in that, according to the judgment of the ecclesiastical rulers upon special circumstances of time and place.

Pictures in Churches forbidden in Spain, A.D. 303,

Thus the famous 36th canon of the Council of Elvira, which forbad "pictures to be placed in a church, or that which is worshipped and adored to be painted on the walls," even though it could be shown that it ought to be interpreted in the strictest and most comprehensive sense possible, yet presents no difficulty to the Catholic theologian. It was a decree passed in Spain, *i.e.*, in a country where the Christian churches and cemeteries were above ground, and in the beginning of the fourth century, A.D. 303, *i.e.*, during the persecution of Diocletian, before which time the heathen soldiers had already penetrated the most hidden sanctuaries of the faithful, even in the depths of the earth, in subterranean Rome. It is not to be wondered at, then, that under such circumstances it should have been deemed necessary to take the utmost precautions to preserve the sacred mysteries of the faith, even though hidden under the veil of symbolical forms, from being exposed to public gaze, lest they should be turned into ridicule, after the fashion of the blasphemous caricature of the crucifixion, lately found on the walls of Cæsar's palace.[1] Even at the present moment there are analogous prohibitions in some parts of the Church. In certain districts of China, for example, the ecclesiastical authorities either absolutely forbid, or barely tolerate the use of images, in order that they may not put an occasion of stumbling in the way of weak brethren. It is thus

and in China now.

[1] See Note A in Appendix.

that the spirit of religious prudence and charity always inspires the legislation of the Church with reference to the accessories of devotion; she encourages or forbids them according to the divers necessities of times, and places, and persons.

Charges of the Protestant Reformers, how answered by Catholic theologians formerly,

There would have been nothing strange, therefore, or inconsistent with the unchangeableness of Catholic doctrine, if no painting or sculpture had ever been used in Christian churches and cemeteries during the first three or four hundred years of the Christian era. A sufficient reason for their absence would have been supplied, by the fact that art was at that time degraded as the slave of luxury or superstition, by the prevalence of idolatry throughout the world, and also by the cruel vexations and straitened circumstances in which Christians then lived. Accordingly, when the Reformers of the sixteenth century made this one of the points of their attack, and accused the Church of violating an express article of the Decalogue, Catholic theologians limited themselves in their replies to a plea for Christian liberty, and a denial that the Church was bound in the same way as the Synagogue by the letter of the Mosaic law. They did not pretend that they were able to show an absolute conformity of practice between primitive antiquity and their own times. On the contrary, some went so far as to affirm that religious pictures and statues were quite unknown during a considerable period of the earliest history of the Church; others, even so late as the middle of the last century, conceded that such things hardly existed during the first three centuries; and the utmost for which any writer of credit will be found to have contended is that their use was "rare."[1]

and in more recent times.

If Catholic theologians at the present day make other and bolder statements, this is not from any change of principle or desire to take up a new controversial position, but simply that they may be in harmony with the latest discoveries and the

[1] See the authorities quoted by le Cte. Desbassayns De Richemont, Les Nouvelles Études sur les Catacombes, p. 273.

decisions of competent artistic authority. Bosio had seen and described innumerable paintings in the Catacombs; but we do not remember that he makes any attempt to fix their precise dates. He was content to publish the monuments he had discovered, even though they were written in a dead language, the very alphabet of which (so to speak) was then unknown. Later writers sometimes ventured to speculate on the chronology of the subject, and timidly hazarded conjectures with reference to this or that particular monument. But it has been reserved to the indefatigable perseverance of modern science to bring together from all parts the evidence necessary for an exhaustive inquiry, and then by a diligent use of its favourite and most effective instrument, comparison, to arrange in chronological order, and so to prepare the way for correct appreciation.

Opinions of D'Agincourt,

Seroux d'Agincourt, seeking to write a history of art, was one of the first to institute a careful comparison between the later Pagan and the earliest Christian paintings; and he set down some of those which he had seen in the Catacombs to the second century, others to the third.[1] This was about fifty years ago. Twenty years later Raoul Rochette went much further, and maintained that it could no longer be a subject of debate whether the primitive Church authorised the execution of religious paintings; for that the question was irrevocably solved in the affirmative—"for the Christian, by the authority of the Church; and for the antiquarian, by the study of monuments." "On our first entrance into the Roman Catacombs," he says, "we seem to be still on the soil of antiquity; the memorials of the first Christians offer us a tradition, or at least an echo of it."[2] Within the last few years, however, the standard of knowledge respecting ancient art and its history has been much advanced; many more specimens, both Pagan and Christian, have been brought to light, and it has been

Raoul Rochette.

[1] Histoire de l'Art, tom. ii. p. 20; tom. iii. p. 4; tom. vi. plate vi.

[2] Tableau des Catacombes Romaines, pp. 162, 176; ed. Bruxelles, 1837.

possible for many more critics of all nations to examine them, either the originals themselves, or accurate reproductions of them by photography. We have no intention of quoting the opinions of those critics at length, or passing any judgment about them; for a reason, which will appear presently, they do not concern us much. We will content ourselves with saying generally, that all are agreed in claiming very high antiquity indeed for some of the existing specimens of Christian painting; and that this verdict is so universally accepted, that a grave and competent writer declares that "it would be a work of supererogation and an anachronism to set to work to justify it. No serious person, having any pretensions to scientific knowledge, would dream of calling it in question."[1]

Mr. Parker's misrepresentations of De Rossi.

Unfortunately, a writer on Roman archæology in our own country has advocated the contrary thesis, and has even ventured to use the name of De Rossi in support of his opinion. As it is the very purpose and profession of these volumes to put the fruit of De Rossi's learning and industry within the reach of English readers, we are reluctantly obliged to take notice of these misstatements; but our notice shall be as brief as the importance of the subject will permit. Mr. Parker, in his volumes on the Roman Tombs and on the Catacombs, writes as follows:—"Fully three-fourths of the paintings in the Catacombs belong to the latest restorations of the eighth and ninth centuries; and of the remaining fourth part, a considerable number are of the sixth century. . . . There are many paintings of the fourth and fifth centuries, of which the earliest are the 'Good Shepherd,' and certain well-known Scriptural subjects. . . . There are also paintings of the second and third centuries, but these are not of religious subjects at all, and might as well be the decoration of a Pagan tomb as of a Christian Catacomb.[2] Possibly, some of the very numerous 'Good Shepherds' may be before the time of Constantine, but the paintings of the second and third centuries are not

[1] Richemont, *ubi supra.*

[2] The Catacombs, p. xi.

Christian nor Scriptural."[1] And he adds, that "though De Rossi is careful never to assert that the fresco paintings in the Catacombs belong to the age of the martyrdoms, yet the popular belief is so completely implied in his great work throughout, that the abridgers of it, both English and French, have asserted it without hesitation."

In reviewing Mr. Parker's work in the pages of a Catholic periodical,[2] we quoted, as a sufficient refutation, the Indexes to De Rossi's *Bullettino di Archæologia Cristiana*, which Indexes were drawn up by De Rossi himself, and contain such headings as the following: "Christian pictures of the first century, of the second, of the third, the fourth," and so on down to the Middle Ages. Nevertheless, in a recent number of the *Archæological Journal*,[3] Mr. Parker has been allowed to repeat his former assertions even more strongly than before, and to declare that "De Rossi knows perfectly well that three-fourths of the paintings are of the eighth and ninth centuries."

Opinion of De Rossi,

To this extraordinary misstatement we are authorised by De Rossi to give the most unqualified contradiction. He says that it can only be accounted for by supposing that Mr. Parker has confounded in his own mind two classes of paintings that are entirely distinct, and has then reversed their relative proportions. "I have thoroughly explained," he writes,[4] "in my *Roma Sotterranea*, what paintings in the historical crypts (which underwent new changes even down to the eighth and ninth centuries) were—not restored, but—executed *de integro* at that time; and their style enables us immediately to distinguish them from those of more ancient ages, and of classical art. Some paintings were contemporaneous with the sepulchres which they adorn; others were made, and often cancelled, and others substituted for them at successive periods, but only in those crypts which we call historical,

[1] The Catacombs, p. 15.

[2] *The Month*—March 1878. [3] Vol. xxxiv., pp. 431–442.

[4] In a letter to the present writer, dated 28th November 1878.

which were frequented and cared for till the time when the subterranean sanctuaries were abandoned, in consequence of the translation of the relics of all the more celebrated martyrs."

It ought not to have been necessary to make this explanation afresh; for in truth De Rossi has spoken plainly enough from the very first, and in all his published works, so that we are at a loss to understand how a contrary impression can ever have been created. He does not hesitate to name the first century, or the very beginning of the second, as the true date of some paintings in the crypts of Lucina, in the cemetery of Domitilla, and of others elsewhere; others again, he attributes to the middle and end of the second century, or beginning of the third; and he sets aside the objections of Protestants as fully and finally disposed of by the facts of the case.

who attributes some paintings to the very earliest ages.

"It may be asked," he says, "whether it is credible that the faithful, in the age of the Apostles or of their disciples, when the Church, fresh from the bosom of the image-hating Synagogue, was in deadly conflict with idolatry, should have so promptly and so generally adopted and (so to speak) baptized the fine arts?" And he answers that so grave a question deserves to be discussed in a special treatise; but that, for the present, he "will only say that the universality of the pictures in the subterranean cemeteries, and the richness, the variety, the freedom of the more ancient types, when contrasted with the cycle of pictures which I clearly see becoming more restricted and impoverished towards the end of the third century,— these things prove the impossibility of accepting the hypothesis of those who affirm the use of pictures to have been introduced, little by little, on the sly, as it were, and in opposition to the practice of the primitive Church." And again, "The flourishing condition of the fine arts in the days of the Flavii, of Trajan, of Hadrian, and of the Antonines, and the great number of their professors in the metropolis of the empire, the conversion to Christianity of powerful personages,

R.S., i. 99, 196.

and even of members of imperial families, such as Domitilla and Flavius Clemens, certainly very much favoured the introduction and development of Christian pictorial art. And, on the contrary, the decline of those same fine arts in the third and fourth centuries; the increasing cost of the handiwork of the painter and the sculptor, as their numbers diminished every day; the gradual but continuous impoverishment of public and private fortunes, which induced even the senate and the emperors to make their new monuments at the expense of others more ancient, all this could not much facilitate the multiplication of new works of Christian art during that period; so that, even if the faithful gained in proselytes, in power, and in liberty, they lost quite as much, if I may say so, in the conditions required for the flourishing of Christian art."

He then goes on to inquire whether it is really true that Christian artists had more liberty in the third century than in the first, and he says he sees every reason to believe the contrary. Not only do the artistic and the economic history of those times prepare us to expect this, but (as he proceeds to point out) the interference of the Pagan government with the privacy and undisturbed possession of the Catacombs would also have exercised a powerful influence in the same direction. If it did not altogether check the employment of artists for the work of decoration, yet it could hardly fail to impose restrictions in the way in which their art should be exercised; and he concludes, that if the use of painting was allowed to the Christians in the third century, *a fortiori* it was in the first and second.

The same allowed now even by Protestant authors, *e.g.*, Rev. St. John Tyrwhitt,

Several Protestant writers have of late years been led to embrace the same conclusion, but by other reasons. Mr. St. John Tyrwhitt, for example, thinks it probable that the Church of the first three centuries was not disturbed by any controversy as to the use of pictorial or other representative ornament in her places of assembly; that though the Hebrew and the Greek element in the Church may have differed somewhat in this

matter, yet that symbolic ornament at least was used in the earliest Catacombs. He considers that as Christians of the first ages met where they could, and as most halls or large rooms in the towns of Greece or Rome were in those days more or less ornamented by painting or carving, Christian congregations were early accustomed to the graceful but unmeaning grotesques and flower-ornaments, or even to pictures with subjects of everyday character, on the walls within which they assembled; that by and by they attached to some of these pictures a Christian meaning, and so the step was made from merely tolerating heathen ornament to utilising it; and that this was probably the origin of Christian art-symbolism; and that the first public sign of alarm, or rather of precaution, was given in that canon of the Spanish Council which has been already quoted.[1] Mr. Burgon is probably more exact, when he says that the early Christians decorated the walls of the Catacombs, because it was the universal fashion at that time thus to ornament the sepulchres of the dead.[2]

and the Dean of Chichester.

It would not be difficult to collect similar testimony from the pages of other authors; but there would be no use in doing so, because De Rossi's judgment, of which alone we have undertaken to be the exponents, proceeds on a totally different basis. It is not founded on any view of Christian theology, nor on any arbitrary theory as to the probable origin and development of Christian art in general, not even on an examination of an indefinite number of examples considered individually, but on a very wide and careful induction, the result of his own and his brother's scientific determination of the chronology of every part of the Catacombs. His plan here, as well as in every other branch of his subject, has been simply to note all he sees, and the precise situation in which he sees it. He rightly judged that this method, so accurate,

Grounds of De Rossi's judgment.

[1] Art Teaching of the Primitive Church, pp. 37, 38, 67.

[2] Letters from Rome, p. 250. See also the New History of Painting, by Crowe and Cavalcaselle, vol. i. p. 1.

so positive and scientific, if conscientiously pursued for many years and in several different cemeteries, must needs supply what had hitherto been the great deficiency in the science of sacred archæology, viz., some reliable information as to the chronology of each particular cemetery, and even of the successive developments of each cemetery, as well as of the monuments found in them. His anticipations have been abundantly justified by the results.

Bullettino, 1872, 64.

His judgment accepted by Mommsen.

"De Rossi has succeeded," says the learned Mommsen, "in fixing the limits of the different great epochs in the history of the Catacombs, and in establishing in a most decisive manner certain important facts. He has also been able to assign chronological limits to the progress and development of various details, such as the monogram of the name of Christ, various monumental *formulæ*," &c. And in another place the same high authority observes, with reference to the Cemetery of Callixtus in particular, that "the successive execution of individual parts of the whole plan may now be traced in periods of ten to ten years; and by this means it has become possible to obtain a chronological precision not only with regard to epigraphy, but also to painting and many other branches of archæology, such as it would be impossible to arrive at in any other field of archæological research. And though some of De Rossi's assertions cannot fail to call forth some opposition, there can be no doubt that he has in a general way laid down fundamental principles and rules which will prove a lasting acquisition to science."[1]

Mommsen then proceeds to criticise an assertion which he considers questionable, and against which he urges many and grave arguments. It concerns a question of the supplement that should be made to complete an imperfect inscription; and De Rossi himself would be among the first to acknowledge the possibility of error in details of this kind, and to listen with candour to any emendations that might be proposed. But

[1] In Neuen Reich., 1871. Chronik der Winckelmannsfeste, p. 184.

with regard to the fundamental rules and principles of his system, they have never been seriously assailed, and every new discovery only gives them fresh confirmation.

Now, even in the physical sciences, which enjoy *par excellence* the name of being exact, when a man has observed a certain number of phenomena which he can group together, he tries to conceive some hypothesis whereby to explain them all. Then he waits patiently, collecting more facts and continuing his observations; and if all the new phenomena which he observes fit into his hypothesis, he rightly considers that its truth is demonstrated. And "in archæological studies," to quote the language of De Rossi himself, "there is no greater delight than that which arises from a succession of new discoveries, which demonstrate as certain that which before seemed probable, as true that which was before only an hypothesis or a conjecture. Even if these new discoveries are in themselves unimportant, they are nevertheless of the greatest use, as well as a source of intense pleasure to the student. For whereas they have been preceded and accompanied by many investigations, and by a continual process of reasoning about the discoveries already made and those which are expected, hereby the soundness and value of this reasoning, and the exactness of these investigations, is put on its trial and brought to the test of facts. If it happens that the new monuments which come to light are in harmony with the arguments that had been used and the conjectures that had been hazarded, their truth receives decisive confirmation; whereas, contrariwise, if there comes to light something altogether different from what was expected, the falsehood of the arguments is demonstrated."

and confirmed by each fresh discovery.

Bullettino, 1863, 73.

It was necessary to enter into these particulars with reference to De Rossi's chronological appreciation of the paintings in the Catacombs, both to dissipate the erroneous accounts of it which have been put in circulation, and in order that our readers might have a clear idea of the basis on which it rests.

That basis is never the mere judgment of art critics as to the choice of subject or the style of execution, though this may be sometimes appealed to by way of corroboration; but it is the ascertained date of the excavation itself on which the decorations are found.

Most paintings in the Catacombs contemporary with their excavation,

It has been already mentioned with reference to the historical crypts, that these continued to receive new decorations as long as the bodies of the martyrs remaining there attracted the devout visits of the people. The dates, therefore, of any painting in these crypts must be determined by other criteria. But the ordinary vaults or chambers (which are of course far more numerous) were ornamented with painting when they were made, according to the general practice of the period; and until proof is brought to the contrary, we have no right to assume that the painting was ever renewed. Experience teaches us that nothing is more apt to be neglected than the sepulchral monuments of private individuals. After the lapse of a certain time, when the immediate descendants of the deceased have passed away, it is not uncommon to see them sacrificed altogether, if need be, to satisfy new necessities, or even new whims and caprices. And, just so, we find painting after painting in every part of the Catacombs—in some parts, *e.g.*, in the Cemetery of St. Soteris, every painting without exception—pierced through and spoilt in order to make room for more recent graves. This does not look as though there had been any care taken to preserve them, or any system of renewing them when they fell into decay.

R.S., iii. 62.

and never renewed.

Some recent writers indeed profess to be able to detect in these paintings, both in the originals and in photographs of them, evidence of various re-touchings. De Rossi, who knows them best, entirely dissents from this opinion; and we have never heard it maintained by anybody who has an intimate acquaintance with them. It is quite certain that no such thing is known to have happened in modern times, and there is no record of its having been done in the days of St. Paulinus of

Nola, to which (we learn from Mr. Tyrwhitt) Mr. Parker is inclined to attribute it. Moreover, if that gentleman may be taken as a fair representative of the advocates of this opinion, it would seem that it is not pretended that there was ever any renewal or change of the whole subject; "the original subjects were faithfully repeated;" only "stronger and less correct markings were painted over fainter and better forms."[1] In a merely artistic point of view, this question becomes of course a matter of some importance; but it certainly is not necessary that it should be discussed here. For in our present volume we are more concerned with the matter than with the manner of the decorations of the Catacombs; and if this is secured to us, we are comparatively indifferent whether we see precisely the same artistic outlines as were seen in the days of the martyrs, or as they were renewed in the days of Paulinus.

Faithfulness of our illustrations.

At the same time, we have done our best in our illustrations —as we have explained in our Preface—to enable our readers to judge of them also from the artist's point of view, though in this we cannot hope to have given satisfaction to all our readers. Kügler laments that the engravings taken of them in former days give no adequate conception of their style. Everybody condemns the careful drawing and brilliant colouring of the illustrations in the magnificent folios of M. Perret, published by the Imperial Government of France in 1852–1856. Mr. Parker complains of our own, as "pretty pictures of modern artists," presenting a strong contrast with the originals; whilst we in our turn consider that his photographs give no idea whatever of the real frescoes of the Catacombs. Photography, admirable for sculpture and engraving, never adequately represents painting. The light blues and yellows disappear, while the reds and greens come out black. Let any one compare the painting of SS. Cornelius and Cyprian,[2] near the tomb of the former in the crypt of Lucina, with Mr.

Mr. Parker's photographs.

[1] The Art Teaching of the Primitive Church, pp. 118, 123, 225.

[2] See Plate XI. in Part I.

Parker's photograph (No. 1813), and he cannot fail to acknowledge that the photograph is a grotesque caricature rather than a faithful representation of the original. As to our own illustrations, we are well aware that they cannot claim to be considered facsimiles of the paintings which they are intended to represent. In some of them, perhaps, we could have wished to see coarser lines and ruder strokes, but we do not think it possible for any engraving really to convey the exact archaic aspect of the originals; and we have stated in our Preface the reasons which have led us not to attempt to reproduce the faded colours and broken surfaces precisely in their present condition.

Artistic merit of the decorations of the Catacombs.

Until the more recent discoveries, it was the fashion to speak in the most disparaging and even contemptuous terms of all specimens of pictorial art in the Catacombs as "poor productions, in which the meagreness of invention is only equalled by the feebleness of execution."[1] Now, however, a higher and truer estimate of their artistic merits prevails. We will not quote the language of De Rossi or any devoted student of the Catacombs upon this point, but only adduce the testimony of independent critics and historians of art. One of these,[2] while complaining of "much pettiness and trifling in some of the decorations," which he attributes to "the frequently enjoined effort to avoid everything savouring of idolatry, even in objects so minute as signet-rings," yet acknowledges that "certain emblems are happily conceived even on the score of art, such as the lamb and the thirsting hart, and the dove with the olive branch." And another says,[3] that "as regards the distribution of the spaces and mode of decoration, they approach very near to the wall-paintings of the best period of the empire; the light arabesques remind us of the paintings at Pompeii and the Baths of Titus; they are characterised by a peculiar solemnity and dignity of style, though accompanied by certain technical deficiencies."

[1] Lord Lindsay's Sketches of the History of Christian Art, i. 39.
[2] Müller's Ancient Art and its Remains, p. 200.
[3] Kügler's Handbook of Painting, p. 14, ed. Eastlake, 1851.

CHAPTER II.

THE RELATIONS OF CHRISTIAN AND PAGAN ART.

General points of resemblance between ancient Christian and contemporary Pagan art—Theory of their relations according to Raoul Rochette, founded on imperfect knowledge; examined in detail—The Good Shepherd—Orpheus—Psyche—Personifications of the seasons, rivers, and other natural objects—Relations of Christian and Pagan art according to De Rossi.

Necessary relations between Christian and Pagan art.

THE quotation with which we concluded our last chapter suggests a very important and necessary subject for our consideration—the relations between the art exhibited in the Catacombs and contemporary Pagan art. Such relations were, from the very nature of the case, inevitable; since, as has been truly remarked by Raoul Rochette, "It was no more in the power of the early Christians to invent a new imitative language in painting than it was to produce at once a new idiom of Greek or Latin." Antecedently, therefore, to examination, we should naturally expect to find many points of resemblance between the works of Pagan and Christian artists, and we shall soon see that these anticipations are abundantly fulfilled.

Condition of Pagan art at the end of the first century,

It was said by Niebuhr that ancient art had closed before Christianity began; but there is a certain degree of exaggeration in this statement. The expressions of Pliny, who belongs to the very time with which we are concerned, are probably more accurate, when he complains that art was in a state of decline, and in danger of perishing, because it was degraded to a mere means of ornamentation. Instead of executing large

and important works, worthy of being exposed to view in public halls or temples, it was chiefly confined to the decoration of apartments. A visit to Pompeii, or the study of books in which the antiquities of that city have been illustrated, sufficiently explains to us the style of decoration that was in fashion. It sets before us a variety of architectural or geometrical divisions of space marked out upon the walls, and occupied by a few isolated figures of mythological story, of genii, or of fantastic animals, small landscapes, graceful wreaths of foliage and flowers, or baskets of fruit, little birds, and other similar trifles. But "even in its degenerate state," says one of the German critics whom we have already quoted, "the art exhibits inexhaustible invention and productiveness. The spaces on the walls are divided and disposed in the most tasteful manner; arabesques of admirable richness of fancy; the roofs in form of arbours, hung with garlands, interspersed with fluttering winged forms; landscapes, for the most part but slightly indicated; all this in lively colours, clearly and agreeably arranged, and executed with much feeling for harmony of colour and an architectonic general effect."[1]

compared with what is to be seen in the Catacombs.

And this is precisely what Kügler refers to when he says "that the paintings in the Catacombs remind us of the paintings at Pompeii and the Baths of Titus." Hence an English Protestant author does not hesitate to say that, on entering some of the most ancient chambers in the Catacombs, "you are not certain for a few moments whether you are looking on a Pagan or a Christian work;"[2] that is, of course, if we confine our attention to the general effect of the paintings, apart from their surroundings. There is the same geometrical division of the roof, the same general arrangements of the subjects, "the same fabulous animals, the same graceful curves, the same foliage, fruit and flowers, and birds, in both;" presently you detect a figure of the Good Shepherd occupying the central

[1] Müller's Ancient Art and its Remains, p. 176.

[2] Burgon's Letters from Rome, p. 250.

compartment of the composition, or the figure of a woman in prayer, or of Daniel in the lions' den, or some other well-known Christian symbol, and you are at once satisfied as to the religion of the art you are studying.

The accompanying sketch of the ceiling of a chamber in the Cemetery of St. Callixtus is sufficient to establish the general truth of these remarks; and in the chromo-lithograph of *R.S.*, ii. tav. xviii.

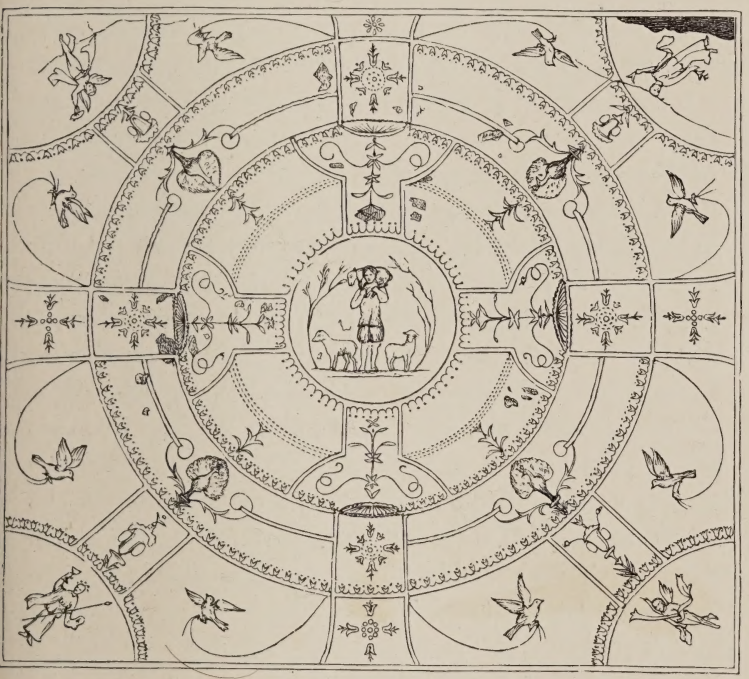


FIG. 1.—*Ceiling of Chamber A_3 in our Plan of St. Callixtus.*

Plate XII. the reader will see a still better specimen taken from the same Catacomb. The vases or festoons of flowers, the fluttering birds attached by light strings to part of the framework of the picture, the ornamental heads, the peacocks with spread tails, the naked genii with slight drapery floating around them, or the clothed figures bearing fruits, or flowers, or a horn of plenty, or the sacrificial *patera*, and intended perhaps to personify the seasons—these all are a literal repro-

duction of what is to be seen in scores of Pagan dwelling-houses and tombs. Yet Daniel between two lions in the centre of one vault, and the Good Shepherd between two sheep in the centre of the other, suffice to establish the Christian character of both these works.

The Christian authorship of the scene represented in the chromo-lithograph might have been suspected, perhaps, on account of the figures in the four corners, which are treated somewhat differently from their Pagan prototypes; but of these we shall have occasion to speak hereafter. At present it is necessary that we should insist on another most important consideration, viz., that these remarks upon the similarity of Christian to Pagan art are often pushed far beyond their just limits. We have already quoted the observation that it was as impossible for the early Christians to invent a new language in painting as in speaking. And no doubt this is quite true; but just as new ideas require new words to express them,—and in this way Christianity has made most important changes in the language of every country where it has gained a footing,—so they require new forms in art, or at least modifications of old forms; and these would naturally go on increasing day by day until at length a whole cycle of Christian subjects would be created, departing more and more widely from those which were familiar to the heathen, and finally, perhaps, excluding them altogether.

Modifications in art by Christianity inevitable.

This seems to be the natural and even necessary order of things; and it at once illustrates and explains an observation which has been sometimes made, as though it were something strange, that we do not recognise in the history of Christian art the first efforts of imitation common to the nations of antiquity,—beginning in rude and formless essays, the result of indistinct notions, and advancing step by step towards excellence; but rather, on the contrary, find the earliest specimens of the art to be the best, if not in conception, yet certainly in execution. But this observation overlooks the fact

that the Christians were not a new and distinct nation, either geographically or politically. They were indeed "a holy nation, a purchased people,"[1] knit together by the closest bonds of a supernatural charity, but they were made up of persons gathered out "of all nations and tribes and peoples and tongues;"[2] and they did not refuse to avail themselves of anything that was good, useful, or beautiful, among the gifts or occupations of those amongst whom they lived. Whereas, then, "the creatures of God had heretofore"—(by painting as well as by other means)—"been turned to an abomination to the souls of men, and a snare to the feet of the unwise,"[3] He, who had now become visible, expressly that "through Him we might be led to the love of things invisible,"[4] did not forbid His Church to avail herself of the pictorial art as a means of rendering spiritual things sensible, and thereby moving and instructing the minds of men. She therefore might freely borrow from Pagan art all that was suitable to her purpose; and it is a mere question of fact, and not of principle, how much she really did borrow.

Christian art, according to Raoul Rochette, a direct imitation of Pagan.

The French writer whom we have quoted was of opinion that there had been a direct positive imitation by Christian artists of Pagan models, and that this imitation could be clearly seen, not only in the general distribution of the whole, but also in all the details of each composition. "The Christian artists," he says, "seem so dependent on heathen art that they were obliged to borrow from it the models even for their Biblical subjects; and where such could not be found, and the artists were forced to stand on their own feet, their execution is in the highest degree defective, and may be rather called a simple indication than an artistic representation of the subjects intended." He suggests, therefore, that they were guided in their selection of subjects by the fact that, of one there were Pagan models that might be copied, of another there were none. The peculi-

[1] 1 Peter ii. 9. [2] Apoc. vii. 9. [3] Wisdom xiv. 11.
[4] Præf. Miss. in Nat. Dom.

arities of costume, and all the minor accessories of the painting were, according to him, determined by the same cause.

Nay, further still, he maintained that the Christian artists were so servile in their imitation of these Pagan models, that it even led them astray from the teaching of their Divine Master, and caused them to introduce false and unseemly details into their representations of the most solemn subjects. Thus, they dared to paint a goat receiving the caresses of the Good Shepherd; and as this animal had no place in the sacred parable, but, on the contrary, was (in another parable) identified with the wicked, its presence here was to be accounted for on the supposition that the artist was imitating, consciously or unconsciously, some Pagan composition. Again, they often put into the hands of the same figure the shepherd's reed or pipe; and this, too, could only be the effect of some reminiscence, at least, either of the statue of Pan, or of some Pagan shepherd.

This theory founded on the alleged existence of Pagan paintings in the Catacombs.

The ability and pertinacity with which this author insisted upon his theory once obtained for it a certain measure of acceptance. Nevertheless, the principal arguments by which it was supposed to be confirmed being now destroyed, it has of late years fallen rapidly into disrepute among Christian writers, though it is, of course, upheld, and even in a yet more exaggerated form, by those writers who deny the Divine origin of Christianity, and seek to confound its chief characteristics with those of some of the Oriental forms of worship or systems of philosophy.

But this now known to be an error.

Raoul Rochette had been misled in part by certain paintings of a semi-Pagan character, published by Bottari, and by him attributed to a Christian Catacomb. But a more careful examination of the locality has shown that the cemetery in which these were found was really no part of the Catacomb with which it is now accidentally connected, but quite distinct, belonging to the followers of the mysteries of Mithras, so that we need no longer be surprised at the mixture of Paganism

and Christianity which they exhibit; *e.g.*, Pluto and Proserpine, under the names of Dispater and Abracura; the Divine Fates, and Mercury as the messenger of the gods, carrying off the soul of the deceased in a chariot drawn by four horses, and descending with it into some abyss in the middle of the earth.[1] *Bullettino*, 1870, 162.

In like manner, another painting, also published by Bottari, in which the principal figure is Victory, and which Raoul Rochette on his authority supposed to be Christian, belongs to a subterranean chamber which was really Pagan. In the genuine paintings of the Catacombs, nothing of this kind has ever been found.

Let us now proceed, however, to describe what has been found there, and which has been supposed to lend support to the theory we are combating.

The Good Shepherd was undoubtedly one of the earliest and most frequent subjects of representation among the early Christians. It is the very type and sample of the peaceful character of Christian art during its first period; and it is to be seen on every species of Christian monument that has come down to us. The Good Shepherd, why so frequently repeated.

Of course, amid such a multitude of examples there is considerable variety of treatment. We cannot, however, appreciate the suggestion of Kügler, that this frequent repetition of the subject is probably to be attributed to the capabilities which it possessed in an artistic point of view. Rather, it was selected because it expressed the whole sum and substance of the Christian dispensation. In the language even of the Old Testament, the action of Divine Providence upon the world is frequently expressed by images and allegories borrowed from pastoral life; God is the Shepherd, and men are His sheep.[2] But in a still more special way is this figure used to denote God's care and rule over His own chosen people, which was so

[1] See Note B. in Appendix.

[2] Ps. xciv. 7; Ezech. xviii. 13.

much more direct and immediate than that over the rest of mankind. He is said to seek and to visit them, to gather them together, to lead and to feed them, as a shepherd does his sheep; and the same tender similitude is used as prophetical of the character of the Redeemer,[1] who was to come down from His eternal throne in heaven into the wilderness of this world, to seek the lost sheep of the whole human race, and having brought them together into one fold upon earth, to transport them thence to the ever-verdant pastures of paradise. Hence it was not to be wondered at, that when He really came He vouchsafed to assume this title as His own;[2] and having done so, it was of course lawful for Christian artists to represent Him in every suitable position and with every fitting accessory that belonged to it. They might add the instruments of the profession, such as the crook, the milk-pail, and the flute or pipe. It has been objected that this last adjunct was derived from the heathen representations of Pan; but this is altogether a gratuitous assumption. It is far more probable that it was taken from the circumstances of real life. Indeed, we may say that it was certainly so taken; for, had it been borrowed from familiarity with the figures of Pan, it should have appeared in the earliest representations of the subject, whereas there is no certain instance of it before the middle of the third century, and it becomes more common as we advance further into the fourth. By that time, a Christian preacher, St. Gregory Nazianzen, could even call the pastoral staff of a bishop by this very name of a shepherd's pipe, ἡ ποιμενίη σύριγξ; and another early Christian writer had said, "I know that shepherds who are skilled in their art seldom use their crook or staff, but lead their sheep by the pipe."[3] It was, in fact, only another way of setting forth the same truth as our Lord expressed when He said that "the sheep

Varieties in mode of representation explained.

[1] Esaias xl. 11; Ezech. xxxiv. *passim.*

[2] St. John x. 14; St. Luke xv. 4; St. Matt. xv. 24.

[3] See Garrucci, *Vetri*, &c., p. 63.

follow their shepherd because they know his voice."[1] So far, then, from the presence of the pipe in the hands of Christ being an anomaly, due to some Pagan artist or model, and so requiring explanation, it denoted an essential feature of the pastoral character, which Christian art could hardly have failed to introduce at some stage of its development, even if it had not been used from the beginning.

So, again, the substitution in some instances of a goat for a sheep receiving our Lord's caresses, may not improbably have been intended as a direct protest against the unchristian severity of the Novatians and other heretics refusing reconciliation to certain classes of penitent sinners. It was a sensible or artistic translation of our Lord's own words, that He "came not to call the just, but sinners to repentance."

The Good Shepherd bearing a sheep on his shoulders

The essential idea, however, of the Christian Good Shepherd, and that which is most frequently repeated on all monuments of art in the Catacombs, is the most laborious and condescending act which belongs to the pastoral office, viz., the bringing home of the lost sheep upon His shoulders. De Rossi sees a special propriety in setting up this most loving and gracious figure among the tombs of the dead, because some prayers of the ancient Liturgies distinctly spoke of the dead as having now been carried home on the shoulders of the Good Shepherd.

not copied from Pagan models.

Raoul Rochette, however, makes such a display of a Mercury carrying a ram, of Fauns, shepherds, or other young men carrying goats, sheep, or lambs, figured on monuments of Pagan, Greek, or Roman art, that he almost leaves his readers in doubt whether this beautiful figure is a certain sign of Christianity; or, at any rate, he implies that the early Christians borrowed their idea of it more from the traditions of Pagan art than from the Gospel. To this De Rossi replies, first, that this Mercury, these Fauns and Pagan shepherds, all naked as they are, have very little in common with the Good Shepherd

R.S., i. 347.

[1] St. John x. 4.

of Christian monuments; and, secondly, that it is extremely rare to find on Pagan monuments any figures of this kind. "In all the frescoes of Pagan sepulchres in Rome, I only know," he says, "of one which can with any show of reason be compared with the Good Shepherd of our cemeteries, viz., that in the so-called sepulchre of the Nasones." Spring is there represented by a maiden with a basket of flowers, and a naked dancing shepherd, having a shepherd's staff in one hand, and with the other holding together the feet of a goat lying upon his shoulders. De Rossi considers that nobody but a man enamoured of paradoxes would dream of setting this figure side by side with the grave figure of the Christian Good Shepherd standing alone, or at least pre-eminent, in the centre or other principal part of a painting. "In confirmation of this remark, I can appeal," he continues, "to a Christian painting as yet unpublished, to be seen in one of the most ancient *cubicula* of the Cemetery of Domitilla. Here is both our own Good Shepherd, and also a female dancing figure, like to that in the sepulchre of the Nasones; but the one occupies the centre of the roof and of the vaulted arches over the altar-tombs, and the other is only one of the accessory ornaments used for the mere purpose of decoration, like the *genii* in Plate XII. I know of one Pagan sepulchre, indeed, where we may see a shepherd clothed in a tunic, with his crook in his hand and a goat upon his shoulders, which is not at all unlike the paintings in the Catacombs; but it forms part of a long pastoral scene, and is by no means the principal figure of the whole. It is impossible to confound such a representation as this, occurring once and in the midst of a series of scenes from agricultural life, with the religious character of the Good Shepherd of the Gospel.

Description of Pagan figures

"As to the mere artistic composition of the group, it is not denied that the Christian artist may have imitated, as far as it suited his purpose, some ancient model of classical style;—*e.g.*, the shepherds on the roof of one of the most ancient crypts of

Lucina (Plate XII.), represented in the act of holding in the left hand both legs of the lambs which they carry on their shoulders, are in this respect not unlike one to be seen in a picture found in Herculaneum;[1] but here, too, the figure of the shepherd is quite naked in front, and he holds the hand of a female who is clothed. It has been conjectured that this figure at Herculaneum may have been made in imitation of the famous statue by Calamis," described by Pausanias[2] as though it existed in his time at Tanagra in Bœotia. He tells us that there was a temple in this town, of Hermes, under the title of Kriophoros, or ram-bearer; and on his feast the most beautiful youth of the citizens used to go round the walls bearing a lamb on his shoulders, in memory of a tradition which stated that Hermes himself had once delivered the place from pestilence by a similar ceremony. Ancient representations of this ram-bearing Hermes are still preserved; and one of them, said to have come from Thrace, may be seen in the Pembroke collection at Wilton House. It is sculptured in alto-rilievo on the face of a terminal block, and is about three feet high. The figure is naked in front, but with drapery hanging down the sides. The hair, bound with a diadem, is arranged in a double row of curls over the forehead, and hangs in a long tress on each side of the neck. At the ankles are wings, or rather what should have been wings; but the later artist in copying the archaic original has misunderstood them. Through the kindness of the noble owner, we are able to set before our readers an engraving, taken from a photograph, of this statue. The youth depicted on the walls of Herculaneum is much more handsome; but this is probably a more faithful reproduction of the statue of Calamis.[3] It certainly corresponds better with the representation on the copper coins of Tanagra, a specimen of which may be seen in the British Museum.

[1] Pitt. d' Erc., tom. v. tav. 56, p. 249.

[2] Lib. ix. c. 22, p. 752, ed. Leipsic, 1696.

[3] Calamis was a contemporary of Phidias. See Cicero Brut., 18.

contrasted with the Christian.

We set face to face with this Hermes-Kriophoros a copy of a statue of the Christian Good Shepherd, taken from a photograph of the original which stands near the entrance of the Christian Museum at the Lateran. It is not known where the

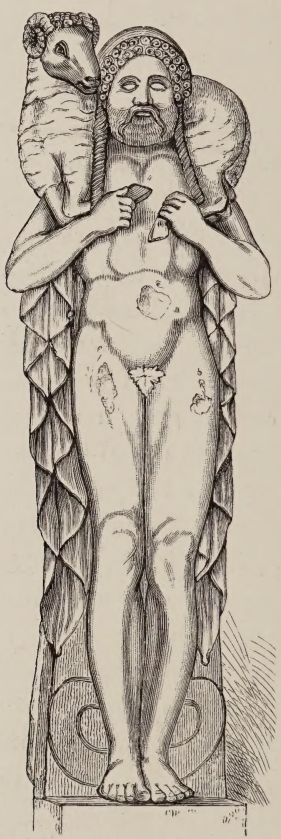


FIG. 2.—*Antique Statue of Hermes-Kriophoros from Wilton House.*

original was found, but it is certainly very ancient,[1] and all are agreed that it is Christian. It has sufficient artistic merit to suggest a suspicion that the artist may have had before him some Greek model, the best points of which he reproduced.

[1] The legs only are a modern restoration.

But if his model bore any resemblance to the statues of Hermes-Kriophoros which have come down to us, he certainly exercised great freedom in departing from it very widely.

We need not pursue the details of this subject any further;

Fig. 3.—*Statue of Good Shepherd from Christian Museum at the Lateran.*

for the whole subject of ancient Pagan statues of gods or heroes, represented as carrying sheep on their shoulders, has been recently examined at length and with great ability by a writer in the "Gazette Archeologique,"[1] and his conclusions M. Chanot's opinion.

[1] Conducted by Messieurs de Witte and Lenormant; 1878, pp. 17 *et seq.*, pp. 100 *et seq.*

tally so precisely with the thesis of De Rossi, that they might almost have been written for the express purpose of supporting it. Yet we learn that he has never read De Rossi's work, and does not study Christian archæology. His conclusions are based solely on a critical examination of all the Pagan monuments of this class that are known to exist; and they may be accepted, therefore, as an independent testimony of very great authority, representing the present verdict of science upon this subject. He sums up, then, as follows :—" These facts suffice to show that the first Christian painters, when they created the type of the Good Shepherd, found in the artistic traditions of their Pagan predecessors not only the Hermes of Calamis, but a whole series of divinities who were Kriophori, or bearers of rams. Nevertheless, it seems quite evident that they did not servilely copy any, but produced a creation which was quite original and which belongs exclusively to themselves. If they followed any ancient models at all, they must have found them in representations of purely rustic scenes; for the essential characteristic of all the Pagan divinities we have been examining is their nudity. The Greeks did not hesitate to attribute this even to their gods and heroes. The utmost they cared to do was to throw a cloak over their shoulders, as they did over the shoulders of Hermes, but they left the front of his person wholly uncovered." [1]

Representations of Orpheus in the Catacombs.

Another figure which sometimes appears in the Catacombs, and is appealed to by Raoul Rochette in support of his theory as to the character of early Christian art, is that of Orpheus. Of this mythical hero three representations have been found; two (that have been known ever since the days of Bosio) in the Cemetery of Domitilla, one that has been discovered in that of Callixtus by De Rossi.

In the former instances, Orpheus is surrounded by beasts, both wild and tame—doves, peacocks, horses, sheep, serpents, tortoises, a hare, a lion, and a dog; in the latter, he sits

[1] See Note C. in Appendix.

between two sheep only; so that he appears here simply as a substitute for the Good Shepherd.[1] But this substitution would not have been possible, had not the artist been taught to see in him some kind of figure or anticipatory shadow of our Blessed Lord, who both unites in Himself all the powers of nature, being Lord of heaven and earth; and in His eternal

Their meaning.

FIG. 4.—*Ceiling from a Chamber in Catacomb of Domitilla.*

kingdom, reconciles in Himself manifold contradictions. And we find traces of this idea in early Christian literature. It occurs both in one of the hymns of St. Ephrem, and in a work of Clement of Alexandria.[2] This last-named writer begins his

[1] See Plate XVIII. 2.

[2] In the Ante-Nicene Library, St. Clement's Works, i. pp. 19, 20.

exhortation to the heathen by reminding them of that fabled Thracian, Orpheus, who "tamed the wild beasts by the mere might of song, and transplanted trees by music." "But not such," he says, "is my song. It alone has tamed men, the most intractable of animals, the frivolous among them answering to the fowls of the air, deceivers to reptiles, the irascible to lions, the voluptuous to swine, the rapacious to wolves. The silly are stocks and stones, and still more senseless than stones is a man who is steeped in ignorance."

Later writers, such as Eusebius and St. Augustine,[1] speak of him much in the same way as they speak of the Sibyls, as though he had made some sort of prophetic manifestation of the true God among the Gentiles. And it is remarkable, that when Alexander Severus placed pictures of Abraham and of Christ in his Lararium, he placed that of Orpheus also. His history enjoyed great popularity in the early ages of the Church, both in the East and in the West; his figure is often repeated on medals of Antoninus Pius and Marcus Aurelius, which were struck at Alexandria, and in the mosaic floors of Roman houses in Gaul and Britain. In one instance (a Roman villa at Frampton, near Dorchester), it is said to have been found together with Neptune and Cupid, and the monogram of our Lord, which would therefore not have been earlier than the fourth century. But it never became a favourite subject among early Christian artists. They had been taught by their priests and bishops to see in the story of his taming wild beasts by the charm of his music a faint shadow of the work of Christ and His Church, softening the hard hearts of men by the preaching of the Word and the persuasive power of Divine grace; they felt themselves therefore at liberty to introduce it into the cycle of subjects suited for decoration; but the extreme rarity of its use shows that the introduction was not popular.

Their rarity.

Still more rare was the Christian use of another Pagan figure,

Psyche.

[1] Euseb. de laud. Const. cxiv.; St. Aug. c. Faust. xiii. 15.

Psyche, which is sometimes objected against the religious character of the decorations of the Catacombs. This does not occur in any of the innumerable chambers in the interior of the cemeteries; but only in a chamber which was almost external to them, where it is found three times; that is to say, in one of the small chambers which was excavated outside the real Cemetery of Domitilla[1] at the same time that the *atrium* was made there, and the house of the *custode*, whereby it was brought into nearer conformity with the ordinary arrangement of the *scholæ* of Pagan clubs or *collegia*. This *cubiculum* opened out of the *atrium*, and was consequently much exposed

Psyche represented in an outer *cubiculum* in Cemetery of Domitilla.

FIG. 5.—*Psyche in an Outer Cubiculum of the Cemetery of Domitilla.*

to public gaze, at least it was always liable to be intruded on, and perhaps might even have been subject to official visitation by the Pontifices. And it is remarkable, that not a single Biblical or Christian subject is painted in it. The decorations seem to have been selected in accordance with the same spirit that dictated the famous canon of the Council of Elvira, and probably owe their origin to the same circumstances. There are birds and flowers and *putti* (sometimes winged), with whom Psyche is playing; not in any of the wanton attitudes common in profane art, but clothed in a long tunic, and occupied in filling a basket with flowers. It is obvious that such a repre-

[1] See Part I. p. 124.

sentation was perfectly innocent in a moral point of view, neither did it come within the category of proper mythological subjects belonging to idolatrous worship; to the Pagans themselves, it hardly had a determinate religious meaning, but savoured rather of the conceits of Pagan philosophy, and was even capable of adaptation to the doctrines of the Gospel, though we need not suppose that any such adaptation was here intended.

Figures of the seasons, rivers, &c.

We need not say much in excuse for the half-naked figures that are used in a few of the *cubicula* to represent the seasons, the head of Oceanus, the bow of Iris, or other figures of earth and heaven, such as the reclining figures of men, who, in accordance with the conventional artistic language of the time, are once or twice made to do duty as representations of rivers, &c., &c. All these belong to a class of forms which had been long since unclothed of any mythological or religious signification, and had obtained a general human meaning. The truth is, that artists, like poets, must needs make use of received images to express the order of ideas they desire to represent, and to adopt the language of signs which they find established, on pain of not being understood. Usage stamps such images, as it stamps words, with legitimate authority; and it would be as unjust to accuse the artist of believing in the idea out of which the image originally sprang, as it would be to hold ordinary men and women responsible for all the false history, philosophy, or theology which lies imbedded in the roots of many of the words they habitually use.

M. Renan's statement of the case.

We have now mentioned all the features of Pagan art with which we are acquainted throughout the whole range of the Catacombs; and it is worth while to set our detailed account side by side with the following summary from the pen of M. Renan. "Primitive Christian art," he says, "is really nothing but Pagan art in its decay, or in its lower departments. The Good Shepherd of the Catacombs is a copy from the Aristeus, or from the Apollo Nomius which figure in the same

posture on the Pagan sarcophagi, and still carries the flute of Pan in the midst of the four half-naked seasons; . . . Orpheus; Pluto and Proserpine; Pegasus, the symbol of apotheosis;[1] Psyche, symbol of the immortal soul; Heaven, personified by an old man; the River Jordan, and Victory, figure on a host of Christian monuments." The reckless untruthfulness of this statement almost places it on a level with the assertion of another writer of the same school, that "the inscriptions in the Catacombs often called the dead who were buried there by the name of Christ;" to which De Rossi could only reply by challenging the production of a single example.

More admixture of Paganism in Christian art after Constantine than before.

It would be far easier to find examples of a mixture of Christian and Pagan ideas in art after the conversion of Constantine than during the ages of persecution. And this for two reasons: first, there were at that time many who had united themselves to the Church more by outward profession than inward conviction; and secondly, the power of heathenism over the minds of men was much broken, so that concessions to artistic taste and the capricious fancy of individuals might now be made, which would have been dangerous before.

Twofold effect of Constantine's conversion on Christian art.

The change in the condition of the Christian community caused by the edict of Milan could not fail to affect Christian art in a twofold direction. On the one hand, those whose religious convictions were sincere, the children of the martyrs and confessors of the faith, would delight in extending to social and public life religious emblems and symbols which had heretofore been confined to private and religious use. On the other hand, men who embraced Christianity only because it was fashionable, would cling to ancient habits and tastes, and retain as much as possible of what they had always loved. Men of the first class might now be inclined to decorate their houses with those symbolic representations which, figured on the walls of their subterranean churches,

[1] Pegasus is a part of the same series of paintings as Victory, and is in a Pagan sepulchre. See page 23.

had served to keep alive the memory and the love of the Gospel mysteries, and all that concerned the future life, during three centuries of persecution. Men of the second class would only remove out of sight what was expressly forbidden, and seek to give to the rest an outwardly Christian character, as far as circumstances would permit. And monuments are not wanting belonging to both these classes.

Christian symbols used on civil and domestic objects,

Bullettino, 1866, 37. 1868, 37.

New excavations are continually bringing to light new classes of objects, of civil rather than ecclesiastical life, articles of domestic furniture and the like, ornamented with Christian emblems or mottoes. In the excavations at Porto, for example, made by Prince Torlonia in the years 1863–1866, there were discovered the ruins of a building which De Rossi believes to have been the celebrated *hospice* of St. Jerome's friend Pammachius; and among the ruins were a silver goblet of elegant form, with a Latin cross in enamel at the bottom; plates also of the same material, chased with a few simple lines and arabesques, and the monogram flanked by Alpha and Omega in the centre; and a bronze lamp, in the form of a ship, the poop of which ends in the long neck and head of a griffin, holding an apple in its mouth, and on the head of the griffin is the monogram, surmounted by a dove. As an example of the opposite kind, we may instance the silver casket, richly ornamented with bas-reliefs, that was discovered in Rome at the close of the last century, formed a part of the Blacas collection, and is now preserved in the British Museum. This casket was manifestly a bridal present, and the young couple must have made profession of Christianity, yet the reliefs in the embossed work are in flagrant contradiction with such profession. On the upper side of the cover is a myrtle garland held by two naked Cupids, together with the portraits of the bride and bridegroom in half-length. An inscription runs round the rim: A ☧ Ω, SECUNDE ET PROJECTA VIVATIS IN CHRISTO.[1] The relief on one side repre-

and admixture of Pagan with Christian figures.

[1] The last four letters are certainly a modern addition; and some persons have thought the same of the IN CHR.; but this is not generally accepted.

sents the toilet of Venus Marina, who holds a mirror in her hand, and is attended by a Triton. On the other side, the relief shows a Nereid swimming on the waves, accompanied by a Cupid.

Such a representation as this would certainly not have been tolerated on the walls of the Catacombs; nor has anything of so objectionable a character ever been found there. Primitive Christian art may have consented to borrow something from her Pagan sister, or rather may have continued for a while to use something of what she had inherited from her Pagan parent; but it was only what was modest and innocent; and even this she soon discarded, "creating for herself a new plastic and pictorial cycle, from materials partly historical and partly allegorical."[1] At first, Christian art may have exhibited the union of new ideas with ancient forms; but the forms were already fast tending to decay, whereas the ideas were full of life and vigour, and therefore they soon found new forms in which to invest themselves.

Relations between Pagan and Christian art, according to De Rossi.

We trust that our readers will not have been wearied by this long investigation into the relations between Pagan and Christian art. The conclusions to be drawn from it we prefer to state in the precise words of De Rossi himself.

R.S., ii. 351, 352.

"Down to the time of Constantine," he says, "the faithful having been brought up in the classical school of art, preserved its whole system of decoration; adopted some few of its figures which suited their purpose; and imitated their style, even whilst inventing and composing new groups to represent subjects which were directly inspired and dictated by the new religion." And then he enlarges upon each of these particulars as follows:—

1. "In the system of decoration they used much frankness and freedom, copying or changing according to their will the forms and fashions of the classical school, all of which they looked upon as quite indifferent; so that, whatever may have

[1] Müller's Ancient Art and its Remains, p. 205.

been the origin of some of them, or their relations with the Pagan religion, their use as mere ornaments had caused them to lose all savour of idolatry. Tertullian himself, notwithstanding his Montanist severity, recognises this important distinction between images prohibited by the Mosaic law, on account of the danger of idolatry, and those which had no connection with false worship, but were merely ornamental (*simplex ornamentum*).[1]

2. "On the adoption of Pagan types, and attributing to them a Christian meaning, they were much more shy and circumspect. They did it very seldom, and it was evidently not looked upon with favour. Moreover, with fine and delicate discernment, they drew a line between what might be conceded to the requirements of prudence and the teaching and habits of the school of art in which they had been brought up, and which it was sometimes even convenient to use, and what was always and everywhere unlawful. This latter class included everything which belonged to the real cycle of polytheistic worship: to the former belonged the figures of Orpheus and Psyche, used towards the end of the second century or beginning of the third; and the seasons, and other figures representing parts of the earth or of the sea, such as the head of Oceanus, Iris, Hippocampi, and even Tritons (but these last very rarely, and only in the sculpture of sarcophagi), used in the middle and latter half of the third century.

3. "The choice of subjects from the Bible and subjects of Christian allegory was a spontaneous inspiration and outcome of the new religion, directed freely by the spirit of Christian symbolism, not suggested by Pagan traditions, nor bound down and hampered by any necessity of imitating this or that model of Greco-Roman art; sometimes, indeed, receiving aid from such models, but sometimes undeniably original."

[1] Adv. Marc. ii. 22.

CHAPTER III.

SYMBOLICAL CHARACTER OF EARLY CHRISTIAN ART.

Christian teaching and Christian art, both eminently symbolical—Interpretation of artistic symbols sometimes difficult—Instances of misinterpretation—Canons to be observed to secure correct interpretation.

Ancient Christian art symbolical.

BOTH the German and the Italian writers, whose judgments we have quoted upon the relations of Christian to Pagan art, give prominent place in their estimate of the original parts of it to symbolism. It could hardly be otherwise, if Christian art was to be in any way a reflection of the Christian faith.

Symbolism had been, more or less, the characteristic of all ancient religious teaching. "All who have treated of Divine matters, both Greeks and barbarians," says Clement of Alexandria,[1] "have hid the principles of things, and delivered the truth enigmatically, by signs and symbols and allegories." At the period in the world's history with which we are now concerned, symbolism was also a prominent characteristic of all art. "Instead of directly denoting the object represented," says Kügler, "the forms of art had now become the mere exponents of an abstract idea; in other words, symbols of a more comprehensive character. Instead of influencing the feelings, they now engaged the thought." He further says, that "it was the dread of idolatry which introduced and consecrated in Christian art a system of merely typical representation."

We think it would be more true to say that Christian art was symbolical, because its principal subjects were religious truths

[1] Stromata, lib. v.

which cannot be depicted in any other way, and because, from the beginning, symbolism had been an essential characteristic of Christian teaching. It had been sanctioned by the example of our Lord Himself and of His Apostles. The parables in the Gospel are real pictures, and they are symbolical; they suggest and teach religious truths by means of sights and acts of ordinary life, invested with a spiritual meaning. But, moreover, Christianity was a religion which had been foretold and foreshadowed by the events of four thousand years; and therefore the historical facts of the Old Testament were essentially symbolical, and St. Paul says expressly that they were all "done in a figure of us, and that they are written for our correction."[1] We may venture to say that the Fathers of the first three centuries never used any other principle of interpretation of Holy Scripture. They did not, of course, deny its literal truth, but they cared infinitely more to develop its hidden or mystical sense. Before the end of the second century, a Bishop deemed it necessary to provide a book which should unfold this hidden meaning of all the words and things in the Bible, all names of places and persons, plants and animals, &c.[2] At a time, then, when the whole atmosphere of the Christian society was so impregnated with the spirit of symbolism, it was impossible that Christian art should not have been marked by the same character.

So also was ancient Christian teaching.

This principle of interpretation of the paintings in the Catacombs, when stated in these general terms, will not be called in question by any one; but there is by no means the same unanimity in the application of the principle in detail. We will first explain the way in which we understand and apply it

[1] 1 Cor. x. 6, 11. Compare Gal. iv. 23. "Which things are said by an allegory."

[2] This *key*, as it is called, was written by Melito, Bishop of Sardis. The Greek original is lost, but many MSS. are extant of a Latin translation, which sufficiently attest its popularity. One of these, illustrated by numerous and valuable notes, has been published in the "Spicilegium Solesmense" of Cardinal Pitra.

ourselves, and then briefly notice another method and state the reasons which oblige us to reject it.

Key of this symbolism to be found in the doctrines of the Resurrection,

We believe, then, that the main thought present to the minds of those who painted these walls and were in the habit of assembling within them, was the same as is thus expressed by St. Paul, that "our Saviour Jesus Christ destroyed death and brought to light life and incorruption by the Gospel."[1] Faith in the resurrection of the body, and in the blessed and everlasting life of souls looking forward to this resurrection, is the supreme idea and essential groundwork of all the symbolism employed on the ancient Christian sepulchres. But, then, the Christian had not to wait till death in order to begin this new life. On the contrary, he would never enjoy it at all unless he began it in this world. He must have it first imparted to him by the Sacrament of Baptism, "wherein we are buried together with Christ unto death, that as He is risen from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also may walk in newness of life."[2] And it must be kept alive by means of a continual partaking of that "living Bread which came down from heaven, of which, if a man eat, he shall live for ever;" for our Lord had distinctly said, that "Except you eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, you shall not have life in you; but he that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood hath everlasting life, and I will raise him up in the last day."[3]

Bullettino, 1865, 45.

Baptism,

and the Holy Eucharist.

These doctrines most fitly represented in a cemetery.

It can hardly be denied that, if Christians were to decorate the burial-places of their dead in any way that should reflect the doctrines of their faith, the resurrection was precisely the doctrine which would naturally take precedence of every other; and since the future life of glory is (according to the teaching of that faith) only the crown and complement of a present life of grace, it seems plain that from this dominant idea of the resurrection there must necessarily follow others, which would open a wide and tempting field to Christian artists in the signs and symbols of the Sacraments; at least of those two which, in

[1] 2 Tim. i. 10. [2] Rom. vi. 4. [3] St. John vi. 51–55.

their essence and in the language of Holy Scripture concerning them, are so intimately bound up with the doctrine of the resurrection.

Our readers, however, must not imagine that our explanation of the paintings in the Catacombs is derived from any *à priori* theory as to what they were likely to be; it is drawn exclusively from a diligent study of what they really are. We see a great number of subjects represented there, and this is the only key which seems to us to unlock the hidden treasures of wisdom which they contain; it is the only point of view which will embrace them all, or nearly all. And this is not our own impression only. It is shared by others also, to whom it certainly is not recommended by any doctrinal prepossessions. It cannot justly be denounced as betraying a determination to discover, in the symbols of the pure and simple faith of the first ages, "hidden indications of all the later dogmas and practices of the Church of Rome,"[1] seeing that it is acquiesced in, or rather is expressed in stronger terms than we have ourselves ventured to use,—in fact, in what we should consider rather exaggerated terms,—by art critics of repute whose Protestantism is undoubted. It is well known that the late Mr. Isidore Hemans sought to enlist the testimony of the Catacombs in the cause of Protestantism; yet in his work on "Ancient Christianity and Sacred Art in Italy," he does not hesitate to say, that "if any one could so cast away bias and prepossession as to form for himself the idea of a Christian Church exclusively from the records of the past that meet us in the Catacombs, his impartial and calmly-adopted conclusion would be that, in the worship of such a Church, all should revolve round a mystic centre of sacramental ordinances."

Once more, then, we will reassert our impression as to the general "art-teaching" of the Catacombs, as derived from an examination of the monuments themselves, and we will state it in the language of a most laborious and able art-critic, the

[1] Edinburgh Review, January 1859.

Count de S. Laurent, who says, "The idea of a new life prevailed over all other thoughts in the mind of a Christian, but not of a new life merely in conduct and action, but specially of a new life imparted by baptism, and continued uninterruptedly throughout eternity; the life of grace, of which the life of glory is only the complement. Death is passed over in silence, as being only the open door between them." [1]

Historical key will not explain the symbolism of ancient Christian art.

Some writers have sought for the key to the interpretation of early Christian art in history rather than in doctrine. Because the New Testament is virtually contained in the Old, and the law and the prophets give testimony to Christ, they think that the ornamentation of the Catacombs had for its object to illustrate the fulfilment of Old Testament type and prophecy by the historical events of the New; to insist upon the events, the prophets and the heroes, of Hebrew history as typical of Christ; and that the representation of His miracles of mercy are only intended to call to mind His life, and the cross to point to His death.[2] But this is quite inadequate to explain the facts of the case. Those facts are, not merely that a certain number of events or persons mentioned in the Old and New Testaments were reproduced by the ancient Christians in painting, but also that this number is extremely limited and incessantly repeated, although there were scores of other subjects contained in the same books equally fit for the artist and equally capable of illustrating the one only truth which, according to the hypothesis we are combating, it was desired to set before the people.

Limited number of Biblical subjects represented in the Catacombs.

If we had been told that the early Christians were in the habit of decorating their burial-places and places of assembly with paintings of subjects taken from the Bible, and had been invited to speculate on the probable subjects of their choice, we certainly should not have confined the range of Christian art within those narrow limits which we find from an examina-

[1] Guide de l'Art Chrétien, i. 10.

[2] Art-Teaching of the Primitive Church, pp. 106, 218, &c.

tion of its existing monuments that it really observed. Out of the infinite variety of histories in the Old and New Testaments, which seemed to offer both fitting subjects for the pencil and useful lessons of instruction to the faithful, only a few were taken; hardly more than half a dozen out of each Testament: Noe in the ark, Abraham sacrificing Isaac, Moses striking the rock, the Three Children in the fiery furnace, Daniel in the lions' den, and the history of Jonas, from the Old Testament; and from the New, the adoration of the wise men, the multiplication of the loaves and fishes, the healing of the paralytic at the pool of Bethsaida, and the resurrection of Lazarus. Our words must not be understood too strictly, as though no other Biblical subject ever appeared in a single chamber of the Catacombs; for Adam and Eve may be seen there; Moses, too, taking off his shoes before going up to the mount; the healing of him that was born blind; of the woman with the issue of blood who touched the hem of Christ's garment; and the woman of Samaria at the well. But of these the examples are rare, whilst of the other subjects that we have mentioned, they are most abundant. Of all Biblical subjects adopted by ancient Christian art, the Good Shepherd is by far the most frequent. It is probably represented twice as often as any other subject; after this, Moses striking the rock, Daniel, Jonas, and Lazarus are repeated with great frequency; and then, but at a considerable distance, Noe, Abraham, the Three Children, and the paralytic. It may be said of all the rest, that they are comparatively rare.

Hitherto we have been insisting upon the extremely limited number of Biblical subjects represented in the Catacombs as a fatal objection to what we may call the historical school of interpretation. But there is yet another objection to be urged against them, which is no less fatal.

They are treated symbolically,

Not only were the artists limited within a narrow cycle of subjects; even these they did not treat in an historical way. Of course, it is quite possible for a composition to be thor-

oughly historical in form, and yet symbolical in sense. A fact might be represented in all its conditions of natural truth, and yet be intended to express certain ideas rather than the mere fact itself. It is obvious that this cannot be done successfully, except under circumstances where the artist can reckon with confidence that he can be understood, either by reason of a general practice conventionally established, or by means of special indications given by himself that this particular painting is to be taken not in its literal but in a symbolical sense. But, as we have already pointed out, the slightest acquaintance with the Epistles of St. Paul, or with the writings of the Fathers, is sufficient to show us how universally the method of symbolical interpretation of the Old Testament histories prevailed in the ancient Church, and how little difficulty, therefore, the Christians who frequented the Catacombs would have had in understanding all the paintings which they saw upon their walls, even if they had been executed with the strictest fidelity to historical truth.

and can only be understood by reference to Christian doctrine.

But the fact that they were not so executed seems to force upon us the conclusion that they were never intended to be contemplated from an historical point of view, but solely with reference to some hidden moral or devotional truth which they were known to signify. We cannot, then, accept Kügler's account of the Biblical paintings in the Catacombs as an adequate statement of the truth. He says only, that "the incidents that exemplified the leading dogmas of faith were chosen in preference to others." It seems to us that they were chosen to the exclusion of all others. And it is the judgment of De Rossi, also, that "the symbolical interpretation of the hieratic cycle is established beyond all dispute, not only by the choice and arrangement of subjects, but also by the mode of representing them, and, in a few instances, even by inscriptions accompanying them."

In the following pages, then, we propose to set before our readers as full an account as we can of the principal paintings

in the Catacombs, and at the same time to suggest the reason of their selection, the meaning which they were intended to convey. And the cardinal points of our system of interpretation will be the doctrines of the resurrection of the body and life everlasting, and the Sacraments which essentially lead to this, Baptism and the Holy Eucharist. No doubt, other doctrines will come before us also in the course of our narrative, but they will occupy a subordinate position; and a probable reason for their introduction in the particular places in which we find them will sometimes be hazarded. At the same time, we do not forget that there are some pictures which are never out of place at a Christian sepulchre, and which are capable of being united with almost any Biblical subject, since they commemorate and symbolise the fundamental dogmas of Revelation. Moreover, we shall not be impatient if sometimes we fail altogether in recognising either the subject of a painting or its interpretation. In these instances, we shall follow the wise moderation of our guide, who always prefers a simple, but incomplete, record of facts to a doubtful conjecture of their meaning.

The meaning of some paintings doubtful.

We heartily sympathise with him in his dislike of too refined and exquisite a system of interpretation, adopted by some writers, who persist in seeing a hidden sense in everything, and refuse to allow to ancient Christian art the use of a single ornament that was indifferent. We shall also follow his example in seeking for the real signification of these monuments in the literary and biographical details which have come down to us concerning the persons who executed them, or for whose use they were executed.

Bullettino, 1867, 88.

Not every detail of a painting symbolical.

We consider that the prophetical or doctrinal sense of any ancient symbol ought either to be demonstrated by written tradition, or, at least, very strongly recommended by the testimony of other contemporary monuments. And in proportion to the number and clearness of the texts or monuments that can be adduced, will be the certainty of the inter-

Canons to be observed in interpretation of symbolical paintings.

pretation which they support. For instance, an apparent agreement between some passage in an obscure ecclesiastical author of the ninth century, and some Christian painting of the second or third, does not suffice to prove, or even to render probable, any real identity of meaning between them; the agreement may be merely fortuitous. But if, on the contrary, a witness or witnesses can be produced, contemporary with the artists, or with their predecessors perhaps, who had helped to form the school and atmosphere of thought in which the artists lived; if it can be shown that certain ideas and modes of thought and expression were dominant in the Christian society at such a time, and formed a part of the common intellectual property of the faithful, we cannot hope to find a surer guide in the interpretation of the works of art of the same period. Thus, when an appeal is made in controversy to the picture of a dove or doves drinking out of a vase, as an argument from primitive antiquity against "withholding the cup from the laity" in the administration of the Holy Eucharist, intelligent readers will feel at once that violence is being done to the monuments which are professedly interpreted, since it is a flagrant anachronism to intrude upon the early ages a controversy which had not then been dreamt of. Contrariwise, if a writer, interpreting the numerous paintings of the Good Shepherd, should insist upon certain details in its execution, such as the frequent introduction of a goat instead of a sheep, as having been intended to denote the infinite mercy of Christ in receiving sinners to repentance, his explanation receives immense support, not only from the general testimony of history as to the earliest subjects of dispute in the Christian Church, but also from the very words of ancient writers,—*e.g.*, of Tertullian, who upbraids "the good shepherd and blessed Pope" of his day for using all kinds of allurements (which the Montanist writer condemns as quite unwarranted) in his invitations and exhortations to sinners; "Seeking," he says, "to find his goats in the parable

Instances of use and abuse in interpretation.

Interpretation by written testimony,

of the sheep."[1] He could hardly have expressed with greater terseness the precise act of many an artist in the Catacombs. They, too, sought to place the goats in the parable of the sheep. We have some right, then, to claim an identity of purpose in the artist and the Bishop.

by comparison of monuments.

In the absence of written testimony, much may be learnt from a careful comparison of one monument with another. "In every investigation," says a writer on the discovery of the sense of the Egyptian hieroglyphics, "we must assume provisionally a basis for our deductions, which, if verified, will tend to establish, or, if disproved, will refute the original assumption. But if this process be constantly repeated with success, the evidence becomes so multiplied in strength that the hypothesis is raised to a certainty. . . . A false reading of characters may possibly fit one inscription, or even a second like it in sense; but to imagine that any false reading will fit hundreds of perfectly distinct documents, and extract from them a consistent meaning, is to assert that a practical impossibility is actually a fact."[2] Precisely the same argument (*mutandis mutatis*) may justly be used as to the interpretation of the Christian symbols used in the decoration of the graves and vaults in the Roman Catacombs. And it will not be out of place if we add the caution of the same able writer, that time ought not to be wasted "by considering the doubts of the vulgar and ignorant, who merely disbelieve because the results are wonderful, and because they will not take the trouble to study the process which has revealed them."

In the following pages, therefore, the sense of the various symbols used in the Catacombs will be determined, not by the shrewd conjectures of the learned, nor by the distorted reasonings of the controversialist, but by the strictest rules of argument and testimony; by a comparison of the various paintings with one another, and with other artistic monu-

[1] De Pudic., c. 13.

[2] Mahaffy's Prolegomena to Ancient History, p. 155.

ments, and especially with the language of Holy Scripture, and of the early Fathers. Where these fail us, or seem to be inconsistent and therefore inconclusive, we are content to hold our judgment in suspense, and to await the discovery of further evidence which may throw fresh light on our obscurity. We would say of any explanation of artistic symbols that we may offer, just what St. Augustine says of his interpretation of some of the figures used in Holy Scripture, that "he desires to be understood, as having spoken without prejudice to the different opinion of any equal or superior understanding."[1] Only we must be allowed to insist, with the same high authority, that when we find anything represented which does not correspond with the truth either of history or of nature, it must be taken to be a symbol, intended to suggest some further idea beyond itself. "When this is done in a way that we are accustomed to, the understanding follows at once, and apprehends what is meant without difficulty; when it comes before us in an unusual form, the understanding exerts itself to seize the hidden meaning, and with varying degrees of success according to circumstances." And finally, we must express, in the words of De Rossi, our intimate persuasion that the interpretation which, on his authority, we offer of the paintings in the Catacombs, is never arbitrary, but founded on the comparative study of ancient monuments and the soundest and surest points of the science of Christian symbolism. It is possible that it may hereafter be partially modified in certain details, but it can never be substantially changed.

Bullettino, 1865, 45.

[1] De Doctr. Christian., lib. ii. c. 40; c. Mendac. lib. iii. in fin.; iv. 10.

BOOK II.

SUBJECTS OF PAINTINGS IN THE CATACOMBS.

CHAPTER I.

SYMBOLICAL PAINTINGS.

Two modes of arranging the paintings, according to age or subject—The latter taken first—Symbolical paintings—Meaning of some symbols universally agreed upon—Anchor—Lamb—Dove—Fish—Instances of the fish in combination with bread, as symbolical of the Holy Eucharist—Milk, a symbol of the same—Testimonies of the Fathers to this interpretation—Dolphin—Stag—Ship—Amphoræ.

Paintings may be arranged according to dates or subjects.

THE paintings in the Catacombs may be arranged either chronologically, according to the examples which have come down to us, to which we are able to assign certain or probable dates; or more scientifically, according to their subjects. Both arrangements have their advantages, and it is hardly possible to keep them altogether apart. Nevertheless, we shall endeavour, as far as we can, to consider them under these two aspects separately; and we think we shall best consult the convenience of our readers, and avoid the risk of repetition, if we give precedence to a classification of them according to subjects.

In this arrangement, it is absolutely necessary that we should

speak first of some of the principal symbols; without a knowledge of these, it is impossible to make any progress at all. Symbolical paintings.

There are some symbols which may be called natural; that is to say, there is so obvious an analogy between certain objects in nature and certain properties or qualities of character, that it never fails to be recognised even by minds of the most ordinary intelligence, and therefore needs no special explanation. For instance, spring-time and morning are natural symbols of youth; sunset and winter, of age and death: wherever the species are found, the ant is always received as a type or symbol of provident industry, a lamb of meekness, a lion of strength, a fox of cunning, and so forth. But there are many more symbols which are entirely conventional, and can only be understood within the limits of a society that knows their origin and history. The meaning of these varies indefinitely, according to the intention of those who use them. How different, for example, was the signification of the Cross to a Pagan and a Christian mind; to the one it represented a degrading punishment reserved for the lowest of mankind, to the other it was the very symbol of redemption. The symbols of ancient Christian art belong almost exclusively to this latter, or the conventional class, and their interpretation therefore requires careful and delicate handling. It is not a field for hasty conjectures, or the free indulgence of a lively imagination, but a real science, which cannot be mastered without much learning, prudence, and integrity. De Rossi, however, is universally acknowledged to be possessed of all these qualities in a very eminent degree; and so long as we follow his guidance, there is no danger of our confounding mere guesses with reasonable probabilities, nor probabilities with certainties.

Some symbols are natural,

others conventional.

We will begin our enumeration of the symbols of most frequent recurrence in the Catacombs, by naming two or three whose meaning may be assumed without fear of contradiction, because they are either expressly mentioned in Holy Scripture,

The interpretation of some universally accepted.

e.g., of the anchor,

or have always been universally accepted; such as the anchor, for example, a symbol of hope, which was often shaped in the form of a cross, so as to suggest to the eye the very foundation

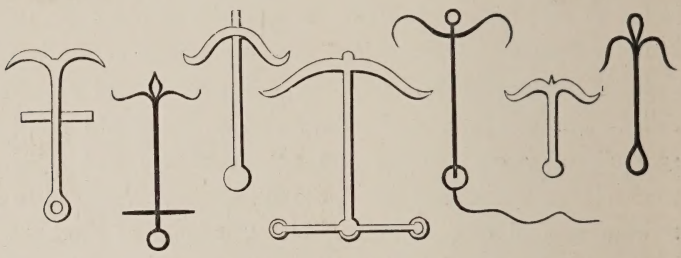


FIG. 6.—*Various forms of Anchors used on Inscriptions in the Catacombs.*

the sheep or lamb,

of Christian hope;[1] the sheep or lamb, as a figure either of our Blessed Lord, "the Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world;" or of ourselves, who are God's sheep; and

the dove.

the dove, as representing both the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity, and holy souls sanctified by His indwelling Presence. Instances are to be found in which the names of two or three deceased Christians appear in such immediate juxtaposition to the same number of doves or of lambs, that it cannot be doubted that the one was intended to stand for the other.[2] But it is hardly worth while to reproduce them here. Indeed, they are so continually engraved on the tombstones, instead of, or in addition to, written epitaphs, that they more properly belong to that part of our work than to the volume on Art.[3] Here we will only remark that the dove seems more naturally, and more commonly, to have been used as the symbol of a soul already released from its earthly tabernacle and flown away to its rest; the sheep, of a soul which still "goes in and

[1] Heb. vi. 19. See Epitaphs of the Catacombs, pp. 162–164.

[2] For the doves (two), see De Rossi's Bullettino, 1864, p. 11; and for the lambs or sheep (three), Garrucci's Storia dell' Arte, tav. 39, vol. 2, p. 47.

[3] See Epitaphs of the Catacombs, pp. 158–162.

out finding pasture" in this life. Sometimes they are found united on the same gravestone, probably with this idea.

FIG. 7.—*Tombstone (still in situ) in most Ancient Part of the Area of Lucina.*

Sometimes also they are used as pendants to one another in corresponding compartments of a ceiling.

In one of the most ancient chambers in the crypts of Lucina

FIG. 8.—*Fresco in one of the Oldest Chambers of the Area of Lucina.*

near the Cemetery of St. Callixtus, two sheep are represented on one of the side walls, and on the opposite side two doves.

The sheep are standing on either side of a vessel in which we shall presently see cause to recognise a type of the Holy Eucharist, and the doves are amid trees and flowers, which is a common symbol of Paradise. It is probable, therefore, that

R.S. ii. 323.

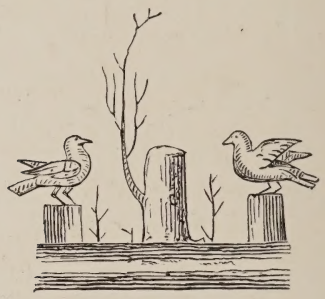


FIG. 9.—*Another Fresco in the same Chamber.*

we should here understand two Christians, strengthened during their sojourn in this world by that food which is the pledge of everlasting life, and received after death to the possession of heavenly joys.

Other birds.

We must not, however, conclude too hastily, that every bird, either painted on the walls or carved on the gravestones of these cemeteries, was meant to represent a dove. Some birds seem to have been introduced merely as ornaments in the corners of the vaulted roofs of the chapels (*e.g.*, in Plate XII.), just as they were used by contemporary Pagan artists. In Plate XIII., also, which is a work of the end of the third century, taken from the Catacomb of St. Callixtus, the swimming ducks seem to be mere ornamental accessories, just as the jumping goats, or other horned animals, which fill the adjacent compartments, with the Bacchic thyssus lying across their backs. In Plate XIV., on the contrary, we consider the birds to be a more important part of the painting. The fruits and flowers are symbols of the joys of Paradise, and the birds are Christian souls admitted to a participation in this happiness. So also are the birds which stand on the edges of the vases and

NEMESI IN PACE
PROCOPII IN PACE
ELIODORA IN PACE
ZOAE IN PACE
ADIONYSAS
IN PACE
ARCADIA
PACE

drink of the ever-flowing fountains of refreshment[1] and the birds in other monuments, which peck at a bunch of grapes or at flowers in a basket. The peacocks, too, are emblems of immortality; and in the midst of all this, the blessed dead who have attained the joys of everlasting peace are placed in the attitude of prayer. They are here also represented in human figure as men and women, with their names over their heads; a mixture of literalism and symbolism, very characteristic (as we shall hereafter see) of the age to which we have attributed the painting.

The dove with the olive branch.

The dove is generally found with a branch of olive in its mouth, or by the side of an olive tree, and this of course is emblematic of everlasting peace; sometimes (as we have already said) with a bunch of grapes, once with a single flower. It occurs once on a gravestone, flying with the olive branch over a basket that is upset, and out of which flowers are falling. A Christian moralist, who was not an archæologist, would not hesitate to recognise in this picture a very happily-devised symbol of a soul released from the prison of this mortal body, and flying upwards, far away from the disappointing vanities of this world, into the region of everlasting joys. De Rossi, however, considers it so certain that flowers in the language of Christian symbolism stand for Paradise, and that ancient Christian art preferred to dwell on the resurrection of the body, and on the blessed life of the departed soul, rather than on thoughts of death or the vanity of human enjoyments, that he refuses to make much account of the position of the basket, but sees here only the same lesson as elsewhere, slightly varied in its mode of expression by the fancy of the particular artist.

R.S. ii. 312. *Tav.* xliii. 1.

[1] See St. Aug. Confess. ix. 3. Speaking of his deceased friend Nebridius, St. Augustine says, "He now applies the mouth of his spirit to Thy fountain, O Lord, and drinks as much as he can," &c. ΠΙΕ ΕΝ ΘΕΩ, *Drink in God*, is a part of some epitaphs. It is also inscribed on drinking glasses. The same interpretation is to be given of birds pecking at grapes or other fruit.

The phœnix.

When the dove carries a palm branch, it was probably intended for the phœnix, or "palm bird,"[1] the well-known emblem of immortality. This bird is found on two or three Pagan epitaphs; and we read in the Acts of St. Cecilia, that she caused it to be engraved on the tomb of Maximus, who was martyred with her husband and his brother. It is not found, however, on many Christian monuments of the Catacombs; at least not in its usual distinctive form, as we know it in sculpture, in mosaics, and on glass, viz., with the radiated nimbus round its head. De Rossi, however, produces the figure of the phœnix as it was carved on the architrave of the ancient doorway of St. Paul's Basilica *extra muros*, where this emblem is also absent, yet the name itself being added, we are able to identify it, and he suggests that the long neck and pouting breast of some of the birds figured in the Catacombs may not be the work of careless or unskilful artists desiring to represent doves, but rather a feeble attempt to indicate the phœnix. Of the phœnix proper with a plain nimbus, he has only found two examples, one on an inscription of the year 385,[2] and another of uncertain date in the Cemetery of St. Callixtus.

The dove always used as a symbol.

The use of the dove as a symbol was continued both on the epitaphs and in the mosaics of the fourth, fifth, and sixth centuries, with the same mystical meaning, as we learn both from the letters of Paulinus,[3] and from the monuments themselves which still survive, and in some of which we see twelve doves sitting on or around the cross, to represent the twelve Apostles. At a much later period, in a Spanish MS. of the twelfth century, in the British Museum, birds flying under the blue vault of heaven have the legend, *Animæ interfectorum*,[4] "the souls of them that were slain," which is the same as Tertullian had said a thousand years before, that birds flying

R.S. ii. 311.

[1] The Greek name for this bird and for the palm tree is the same.

[2] Inscript. Christianæ, I. p. 155.

[3] Ep. xii. ad Severum. p. 142, ed. 1622.

[4] Apoc. vi. 9.

up to heaven were types of the martyrs rising to God.[1] Indeed, we may venture to say that this letter of the alphabet of Christian symbolism has never been wholly forgotten or fallen into disuse.

The fish: *when used as a symbol.*

This cannot be said of the fish, which is the next sacred symbol we would mention, the most important perhaps of all, and certainly as ancient as any, for its use grew gradually less frequent, even as early as in the first half of the third century, and may almost be said to have ceased altogether as soon as the ages of persecution had ended. On the Christian inscriptions in Gaul, which generally both begin and abandon the use of each Christian symbol nearly a century later than they were used or abandoned in Rome, there are only seven examples either of the word or of the figure of a fish among the whole number (exceeding 700) collected and published by Le Blant.[2]

R.S. ii. 317.

This question of the period during which the symbol was used being one of importance, we will say a few words about it in this place, before we go on to inquire into the mystical meaning of the fish, especially in combination with other symbols presently to be mentioned. It appears, then, that there is no instance of a fish being used with any theological sense on a Christian monument later than the fifth century. Fishes, indeed, may be found carved at the bottom of fonts, or on the *ambones* of Ravenna, in the sixth century. But in these and some similar instances that might be adduced, they seem to be used chiefly for ornament's sake, and are placed among other Christian emblems which can hardly be considered symbolical at all; whereas, in the older Christian epitaphs and paintings, the fish stands alone as a manifest token of the Christian faith; and we find it so used much more frequently in the second and third than in the fourth and fifth centuries. Of all the epitaphs from the Catacombs having dates, it is found on one only after the date of Constantine, and on one

Bullettino, 1864, 10.

[1] De Resurrect. c. 52.

[2] Inscript. Christ., tom. 1, p. 370.

before it,[1] A.D. 400 and A.D. 234. But it is found on nearly a hundred other epitaphs which, from various indications, we can refer with confidence to the first three centuries; so that, on the whole, De Rossi considers it quite proved that, whereas we cannot say how early the mystical use of this emblem began, we are sure that it had almost, if not altogether, ceased by the beginning of the fifth century. It had become extremely rare by the middle of the fourth, so that, whereas nearly two thousand inscriptions subsequent to Constantine are ornamented with palms, crowns, birds, sheep, crosses, and monograms, only one is to be found amongst them bearing the symbol of a fish.

Why used.

It follows next to inquire in what sense and for what reason the symbol was used. The thoughts of most of our readers would naturally recur to the parable in which our Lord compares the kingdom of heaven to a net cast into the sea, and gathering together of all kinds of fishes; or again, to the words with which He called Simon and Andrew to the apostolate, saying, "Come ye after Me, and I will make you to be fishers of men." The idea, however, suggested by these passages, though not unknown either to the Christian liturgies or to Christian art, was certainly not the leading idea which directed the use of this symbol in the Early Church. The fish entered into the cycle of Christian thought and art in primitive times, partly because Christians owed their new and spiritual birth to the element of water; partly because Christ Himself was commonly spoken of under the mysterious name of the fish.

A symbol both of Christ and of a Christian.

Like the lamb, therefore, or the dove, the emblem of the fish was used in two senses. Sometimes it represented our Blessed Lord, sometimes a Christian soul. A few words must be said about both of these meanings.

[1] In estimating this statement, we must remember that we have not more than thirty dated epitaphs prior to Constantine, and more than fifteen hundred after him. See Epitaphs of the Catacombs, p. 37. In the inscription of 234, the fish and the anchor are found together.

Why used as an emblem of a Chrstian.

First, it was used as an emblem of a Christian soul, but not exactly in the same sense in which it stands in the sayings of our Lord, but rather, because "through the waters of Baptism men are first quickened, and only live as they abide in that quickening element into which they were then brought."[1] The figure, as it is used in the language of Christ, is very appropriately enlarged upon by Clement of Alexandria, Origen, St. Paulinus, St. John Chrysostom, and others, as follows. The first-named writer, in the grand Orphic hymn commonly attributed to him, addresses our Lord as "the Fisher of mortal men," who by His sweet life entices away "from the wild ocean of the world's sea of sin the holy fish that are to be saved." Origen[2] observes that ordinary fish (irrational fish, as he calls them) die when they are caught, and no new life succeeds to their death; but that the fish, caught by Jesus Christ, die indeed to self, to sin, and to the world, but afterwards are made alive by the Word of God and receive another life. St. Paulinus of Nola[3] says, that the Christian preacher, as the fisher of men, draws forth freely for God, by means of the hook of the life-giving Word, from the deep and bitter waves of this world, rather to give them new life than to destroy them. St. Chrysostom and St. Hilary[4] say much the same thing, and St. Maximus of Turin[5] expresses it very tersely, when he says *Palpitantes pisces, vivificandi homines,* "Dying fish, to be made alive as men."

All these commentaries find a very appropriate expression in art in the mosaic pavement of the Baptistery at Pesaro, of the age of Justinian, where we see a figure, partly of a man, partly of a fish, with a legend—

EST HOMO NON TOTUS, MEDIUS SED PISCIS AB IMO,

[1] Trench on the Miracles of our Lord, p. 148; to whom we are indebted for some of the passages from the Fathers which follow.

[2] Hom. xvi. in Jerem.

[3] Ep. ad Florent. xxxii. p. 282. Ed. Antwerp, 1622.

[4] In S. Matt. p. 677.

[5] Serm. xcvi.

telling us that he is not yet wholly a man, but a fish in all the lower part of his body; clearly implying that as he emerges from the laver of the new birth, he will altogether cease to be a fish and become a living man. The same idea may perhaps have inspired the artist of the painting in Plate XV. 3, in which the figure of a man catching a fish is immediately succeeded by a man baptizing a child.

The fisherman is much less frequently represented in the Catacombs than the Good Shepherd; and it has been conjectured that perhaps the reason of this may be, because it only suggests the initiatory rite, and leaves out the habitual daily care for the members of Christ, after they have been brought into the fellowship of the Church. Be this as it may, it is certain that in other works of art and in other commentators, baptized Christians themselves are often represented as fish. "The two images, indeed, cannot stand together," as Archbishop Trench says, "for they mutually exclude one another; in the one the blessedness is to remain in the waters as the vivifying element, in the other to be drawn forth from them into the purer and clearer air." Nevertheless, whatever logical inconsistency may be involved in it, the fact is plain, that both ideas occur in ancient Christian writers,[1] and both are represented in ancient Christian art. We have already quoted St. Paulinus as using one of them; in another letter, the same writer makes use of it again, at the very same time that he is claiming to have been made a fish, "the son of a dolphin," through having received baptism at the hands of "a dolphin," the bishop named Delphinus;[2] and long before his time, Tertullian[3] had said of all Christians, that we are "little fishes born in water after the example of Jesus Christ our fish." And in art a single example may suffice, such as the accompanying representation of two fish on a gravestone,

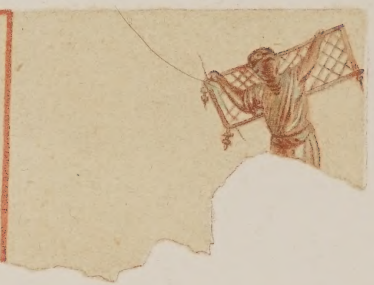
[1] In the Key of Melito, fish are explained as standing for "all the elect," c. xii. n. 25.

[2] Ep. xvi. p. 178, ed. Antwerp.

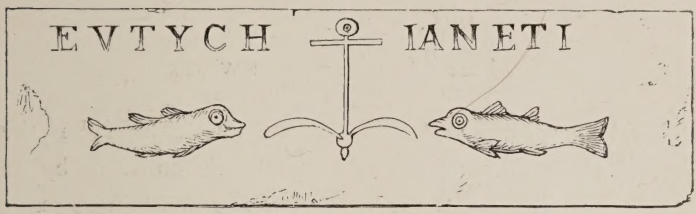
[3] De Baptismo, c. 1.

2.

3.



i.e., of two Christians attracted towards that which is the centre and lodestone of a Christian's affections, the Cross of Christ.



Bull., 1870, 61.

FIG. 10.—*Epitaph from Prætextatus', not later than beginning of third century.*

Origin of its use as symbol of Christ.

But we must go on to speak of the other signification of the fish, contained in the passage we have just quoted from Tertullian, and already alluded to, viz., that it was a symbol of Christ. It may not be possible to determine the precise history of the origin of this symbol; but the antiquity and universality of its use are unquestionable. It can be established by a catena of Fathers, beginning from Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and Tertullian, in the second century, down to St. Peter Damian, in the eleventh. It is believed that it was in use even in apostolic times,[1] and suggested that famous acrostic quoted by Eusebius[2] and St. Augustine[3] from the so-called Sibylline verses, which gives us, by taking the initial letters of so many successive lines, the Greek words ΙΗϹΟΥϹ ΧΡΕΙϹΤΟϹ ΘΕΟΥ ΥΙΟϹ ΣΩΤΗΡ, "Jesus Christ, Son of God, Saviour;"[4] and then the initials of these several words taken together make up the word ΙΧΘΥϹ, or "fish."

[1] See dissertation of P. Godefroy Lumper in Migne's Tertullian, i. 150.

[2] Oratio Constant. ad Cœt. Sanct. § 18.

[3] De Civ. Dei, xviii. 23. We know from the testimony of Cicero (De Divin. ii. c. 54) that acrostics were a characteristic of the Sibylline verses. "In Sibyllinis ex primo versu cujusque sententiæ primis litteris illius sententiæ carmen omne prætexitur."

[4] In the original, the initials of the next lines give the word ΣΤΑΥΡΟϹ, viz., "Cross." In olden times it was customary in the Church of France to sing these Sibylline verses in church at Christmas with all possible solemnity. *Martene, De Ant. Eccl. Rit.*, lib. iv. c. xii. 13.

I ΗΣΟΥϹ	=	JESUS
X ΡΙϹΤΟϹ	=	CHRIST
Θ ΕΟΥ	=	OF GOD
Y ΙΟϹ	=	SON
C ΩΤΗΡ	=	SAVIOUR

Probably begun in Alexandria.

We have already said that Clement of Alexandria[1] is the earliest witness to the use of this symbol; and it is by no means improbable that the schools of Alexandria were really the first to originate it. The Church of that city was composed largely of converts from Judaism; and it was a very common practice of the Jews to coin names for their military leaders or other great men, by means of a combination of the initial letters of some other names, or legend, or motto, closely connected with them. The name of Macchabees, for instance, is said to be made up of the initial letters of the motto which Judas Macchabeus is supposed to have ever had upon his lips and on his banners, "Who is like to Thee among the strong, O Lord?"[2]

Instances of its use by the Fathers in this sense;

Whether, however, the Sibylline verses received their inspiration from Alexandrine Christians, or whether these verses themselves first originated the idea, at any rate we cannot wonder that when once a mystical meaning had been suggested for the word fish, it gained general acceptance in the Church. It became a sacred *tessera*, embodying, with wonderful brevity and distinctness, a complete abridgment of the Creed—a profession of faith, as it were, both in the two natures and unity of Person, and in the redemptorial office of our Blessed Lord. "It contains in one name, by means

[1] Pædag. iii. 2.

[2] Exodus xv. 11. See Grotius, Critic. Sac., t. iii. c. 2695. The interpretation given in the Epistle of Barnabas of the number 318, the servants born to Abraham in his house (Genesis xiv. 14), is only another example of the same kind. See a very interesting paper by P. Cahier in his *Melanges d'Archeol.* i. 192.

of its single letters," says Optatus,[1] "a whole multitude (*turbam*) of holy names." Hence Clement names the fish as one of several figures that might very properly be used on Christian seals. Origen[2] speaks simply and without explanation of our Lord as "figuratively called the fish;" and in every story of sacred writ connected with a fish, the early Church recognised some Christian figure or allusion. "He descends," says Optatus,[3] "in baptism, in answer to our prayers, into the baptismal font, so that what before was water is now called from the fish *piscina* (*a pisce*)." "The fish which is first taken," says St. Jerome, "in whose mouth was the coin which was paid as the tribute-money to those who demanded it, was Christ, the second Adam, at the cost of whose blood both the first Adam and Peter, that is, all other sinners, were redeemed;" and elsewhere[4] he speaks of each one of the faithful as "a fish and son of the Fish." "By that fish whereof we read, which was caught in the river Tigris, whose gall and liver Tobias took for the protection of his wife Sarah and the enlightenment of the blind Tobias, we understand Christ." It is a type of the manner in which, when Christ is near, the works of the devil are destroyed. "By the interior remedies of that fish," says St. Prosper of Aquitania,[5] "we are daily enlightened and fed;"—words which contain a manifest allusion to the two Sacraments of Baptism and the Holy Eucharist.

It would be easy still further to multiply quotations from the Fathers, showing how familiar to them was this identification of the fish, wherever it might be found, with our Blessed Lord. But such an accumulation of proof is unnecessary. The important thing to observe is already sufficiently clear, viz., that all these hidden meanings of Holy Scripture were

[1] Adv. Parmen. lib. iii.
[2] In Matt. Hom. xiii. 10.
[3] Adv. Parmen. lib. iii. 2.
[4] Ep. vii. ad Chrom.
[5] Or the author of the book *De Promiss. et Prædic. Dei*, which goes by his name, ii. 39.

derived from the simple fact tacitly assumed by them all, viz., that the fish was the recognised conventional sign for Christ.

and in monuments of art.

Hence we find a multitude of little fishes, in crystal, ivory, mother of pearl, enamel, and precious stones, in the graves of the Catacombs; some of them with holes drilled through the head, to be worn round the neck; one with the word ΣΩCAIC ("Mayest Thou save us!") engraved upon its back; once, also, we find a tombstone with a Pagan inscription on either side, but now used to close a Christian tomb, and, besides chipping and cancelling the Pagan epitaph, the fossors roughly cut a fish upon the stone, in order to mark its Christian character.

Bullettino, 1863, 38.

The fish seldom used alone; in paintings often found in connection with bread.

Hence, also, we can interpret with certainty a number of various complications of artistic symbols into which the fish enters. And this is an important test of the truth of our interpretation. For it is comparatively easy to assign a meaning to a single symbol standing alone, since any isolated fact will often lend itself to several different interpretations. But if this symbol be found united with others of a similar character, springing from the same source, but taking a different form, and if this same meaning suffices to explain them all, it receives and communicates a light and force quite irresistible, wresting conviction even from the most unwilling mind. The differences of the symbols thus brought together mutually illustrate and perfect one another, and prove as fruitful of instruction as their resemblances. Together they fix and establish with certainty, what each, taken separately, may have left only undetermined and probable. It is in this way that innumerable questions have been decided in the interpretation of profane antiquities, and the process is as legitimate and as successful when applied to Christian antiquities.

Moreover, this test is the more easy of application here, because it happens that the fish (either the word or the symbol) is rarely found quite alone in the monuments of the Roman cemeteries. In more than two-thirds of the numerous instances in which it is repeated, it is found in union with other symbols,

and so intimately united with them as manifestly to have been intended as a part of one whole. So far as these are engraved upon the tombstones, they are explained in our account of the epitaphs.[1] Here we are only concerned with the paintings, into many of which the fish enters as an important feature, and always in combination with bread.

not only in allusion to the miraculous multiplication of the loaves and fishes,

It will at once occur to the reader to think of the two miracles of the multiplication of the loaves and fishes; and these do appear among the paintings to which we refer, or, at least, there are manifest allusions to them; but even in these the artist continually violated the literal truth of the Gospel narrative, for the express purpose (as it would seem) of showing his intention to go beyond the letter, and to suggest another and a hidden meaning; to idealise the history, as it were, and to raise it to the height of a symbol.

but in other non-historical scenes.

But it is not to pictures of this class that we are principally referring. We are thinking rather of representations which no Biblical history will suffice to explain; such as a fish swimming and carrying on its back a basket of bread; a three-legged table with a large fish and two or three loaves lying upon it; and the same again, with two guests seated at the table, or with a man standing before it, apparently in the act of blessing what is upon it, whilst a woman stands opposite, with her hands expanded in prayer. If these are not mere caprices of the artist, it is clear that they must have been intended to render sensible some doctrine rather than to represent any fact, since there is no history to which they correspond; they were signs of religious ideas and truths, rather than imitations of facts; in a word, they were symbolical, or as Raoul Rochette calls them, ideographical paintings, not historical. To what, then, do they refer? what ideas did they represent to those for whom they were made?

Plate XVI. 1. 2. 3.

In order that we may give a sure answer to this question, we must examine some of the paintings more closely.

[1] See Epitaphs of the Catacombs, pp. 131–136.

At the top of Plate XVI., the reader will see a singular representation of a figure which is twice repeated on the wall of one of the most ancient *cubicula* of the crypts of Lucina, now united to the Cemetery of Callixtus. It is marked Y in the map.

Plate XVI. 1 explained. Map I. Y.

A fish, apparently alive and swimming, bears upon its back a basket of bread. This bread is not of the ordinary kind, but of a gray ashen colour, such as was used by the people of the East, and especially by the Jews, as a sacred offering of the first fruits to the priests, and was known to the Romans by the barbarous name of *mamphala*. The bread lies on the top of the basket, but in the middle of it, in both pictures, may be clearly distinguished a something red, a something that seems best to represent a glass containing red wine; and De Rossi produces a text from St. Jerome, of which the figure may be taken as a literal artistic translation. St. Jerome is speaking of Exuperius, Bishop of Toulouse, who had spent all his substance for the relief of the poor, and he observes that "nothing can be richer than one who carries the Body of Christ in a basket made of twigs, and the Blood of Christ in a chalice of glass."[1] In the painting before us the basket is precisely of this kind, and we know from other sources that baskets of wickerwork were used in the sacrificial rites both of the Jews and Gentiles, and that the Christians also had continued the use of vessels of the same material for carrying the Blessed Sacrament, where gold or silver could not be had.[2] It is certain, also, that in the early ages of the Church, the chalices were not unfrequently made of glass.[3] We conclude, therefore, that this singular painting—at once the most ancient and the most simple that we know, of the fish united with bread—was intended to refer to the mystery of the Holy Eucharist. The species of the Blessed Sacrament are here visibly before our eyes. Its reality is also suggested, but veiled under the figure of the fish.

Bullettino, 1864, 90.

[1] Ep. 125, *alias* 4, ad Rusticum, tom. i. 1085, ed. Migne.

[2] See Marini, Fratr. Arvali, 396, 423; Pelliccia de Eccl. Polit., ed. Cologne, tom. ii., dissert. 1, § 2.

[3] Lib. Pontif., in Zephyrino, ii.

1

2.

Let us look next at the second figure in Plate XVI. Here is a three-legged table, with a fish and two loaves upon it, and on the ground on either side of the table are arranged seven baskets full of loaves. This is not a literal representation of either miracle of the multiplication of the loaves and fishes, though it puts us in mind of them. Neither is it a reproduction of anything that was in common use on heathen monuments of the same period. But when taken in conjunction with the third figure on the same Plate, which forms a part of the decoration of the same chamber,[1] it is hardly possible not to recognise in it a reference to the same adorable mystery. It is "the table of the Lord," spread for the Eucharistic feast.

Plate XVI. 2 explained. Plan A_2.

This reference will be seen still more clearly, if we consider another scene from the same chambers, represented in Plate XVII. This scene may be said to be partly historical, and partly symbolical, but its interpretation will find its most fitting place in the present division of our subject. It is repeated in three or four chambers successively, with some slight variation, and sets before us seven men (in one instance the figures are nude) seated at a couch-table, with dishes of fish before them, and eight or twelve baskets of bread arranged along the floor in front of the picture. And there is a history in the last chapter of the Gospel according to St. John, of which it seems to be a literal representation.

Feast of the seven disciples by the Sea of Tiberias, represented in Plate XVII. Plan A_3,

Jesus was manifesting Himself to His disciples at the sea of Tiberias, and the Evangelist has recorded the circumstances of the manifestation with great minuteness. Of ourselves we might not perhaps have noted anything very special in these circumstances, of such a character as to lay a singular claim upon the Christian artist above all other manifestations; nevertheless we find, that as a matter of fact it did claim their attention and occupy their pencil in a pre-eminent degree, and even to the exclusion of every other history of the same class. The details of the incident, which it is important

described by St. John,

[1] This figure will be explained in the next chapter.

came down from heaven.' The fish caught by the Apostles are the Church, which must be incorporated into Christ, in order to become a partaker of everlasting happiness; we ourselves, and all true believers to the end of time, are represented by those seven disciples" (the number seven being often used in Holy Scripture for completeness or universality), "that so we may understand that we too have a share in so great a Sacrament, and are associated in the same happiness." And he concludes—"This is the dinner of our Lord with His disciples, with which St. John finishes his Gospel, though he had many other things to say about Christ, *magnâ ut existimo et rerum magnarum contemplatione;*"[1] as though he would say, This history forms a suitable conclusion to the whole Gospel, because it "exhibits a kind of link or transition from Christ's earthly to His heavenly kingdom;"[2] inasmuch as it sets forth under a veil, or in a mystical manner, the union of all Christian souls with Christ their Head, first, by means of the bread from heaven, the Holy Eucharist, in this world, and then in that yet more intimate enjoyment of Him in the next world, whereof the Sacrament of the altar is at once a pledge and a foretaste.[3]

and the rest of the Fathers.

We have said that no thoughtful student of Scripture can justly object to this interpretation of St. John's words by the great Doctor of the West, as though it were the mere fruit of his own imagination, since it rests upon principles which are even now universally acknowledged; but this is far short of what might have been said. For the truth is, that in the early ages of the Church no other interpretation of the narrative was ever dreamt of. So unanimous is the *consensus* of the Fathers in seeing here a mystical representation of the Holy Eucharist, that Cardinal Pitra tells us he can only find a single

[1] In Joann. Ev. Tract. 123, sec. 2, tom. iii. p. 2460, ed. Gaume.

[2] Keble on Eucharistical Adoration, c. ii.

[3] "In capturâ piscium commendavit Ecclesiæ Sacramentum, qualis futura est ultimâ resurrectione mortuorum."—St. Aug. *ubi supra.*

ancient writer (the pseudo-Athanasius) who does not so interpret it. We shall content ourselves with quoting here one testimony. Prosper Africanus, commenting upon this same passage of the Gospels, speaks of our Blessed Lord as "that great Fish who satisfied from Himself (*ex se ipso*) the disciples on the shore, and offered Himself as a fish (ΙΧΘΥΝ) to the whole world."[1]

Other Scriptural notices of fish, similarly explained of the Holy Eucharist.

Moreover, we must remember that this is not the only passage of Holy Writ in which the Fathers recognised the Blessed Sacrament of the altar under the same symbol. We have already[2] quoted one who speaks of Christ as "that Fish from whose interior remedies we are both enlightened and fed;" referring, of course, to the history of Tobias, on the one hand, and to the two Sacraments of Baptism and the Holy Eucharist, on the other. St. Augustine also,[3] speaking of the authority given to man at the creation over the fishes of the sea, is immediately reminded of these same Sacraments, which he describes as "that solemnity whereby those whom God's mercy seeks out amid many waters are first initiated, and that other solemnity wherein that Fish is manifested, which, when it has been drawn forth from the deep, pious mortals eat." These words could not have been written by St. Augustine, or at least they would have been absolutely unintelligible to his readers, unless the idea of the fish as a symbol of the Holy Eucharist had been perfectly familiar to them; and no one can reasonably call in question our right to attribute to Christian artists the same ideas upon this subject as were so manifestly familiar to Christian preachers.

Also the miracle at Cana, and the multiplication of the loaves and fishes.

But there were, more especially, two of our Lord's miracles in which the Fathers saw distinct foreshadowings of the mystery of the Holy Eucharist;[4] viz., the miraculous multiplications of the loaves and fishes, and the changing of water

[1] De Promiss., ii. 39. [2] See page 63. [3] Confess., xiii. 23.
[4] St. Ambrose in St. Luc., c. ix.; lib. vi. 84; De Virginibus iii. 1; St. Cyril Alex., Catech.

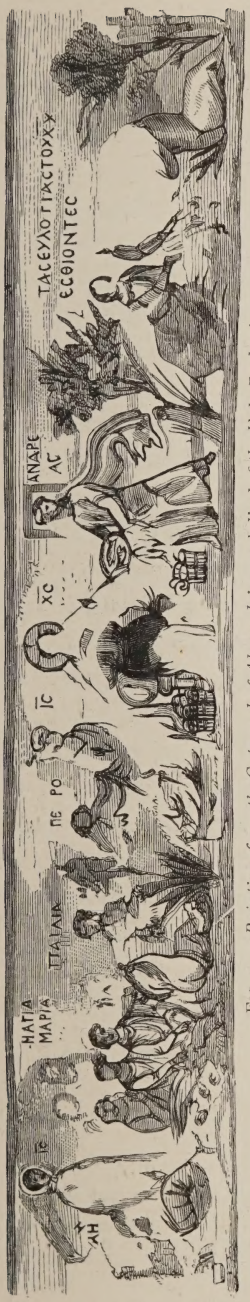


FIG. 11.—*Painting from the Catacomb of Alexandria, symbolical of the Holy Eucharist.*

into wine at Cana in Galilee. These miracles had no connection historically, either with the dinner which has just been spoken of, or with one another; but because all these events had the same symbolical meaning and referred to the same mystery, therefore the Christian artists delighted to bring them together. Thus, as we have already mentioned, a number of baskets of bread always forms the foreground of the picture of the feast of the seven disciples. Moreover, because they desired that the minds of those who saw their paintings should not rest in the outward semblance of the scene, but be carried forward to its hidden and mystical meaning, they continually departed, more or less, from its literal truth; *e.g.*, we rarely find either seven or twelve baskets of bread, but eight; a number which does not belong to either narrative; and not six water-pots of wine, but seven. It was the symbolism of a religious idea they aimed at, and not the representation of a real history.

Nor was the use of this symbolism confined to the artists of Rome. An ancient Christian cemetery has lately been discovered in Alexandria, subterranean, and in other respects also bearing a certain resemblance to the Roman Catacombs. In one of the

Similar paintings in a Catacomb at Alexandria.

chapels, and precisely over the altar where the sacred mysteries would have been celebrated, there are the remains of a painting, belonging (De Rossi believes) to the first half of the fourth century, though retouched perhaps in some points at a later period, in which all these various scenes are brought together, and their interpretation given in writing. That is to say—In the middle is our Blessed Lord, with Peter on His right hand and Andrew on His left, holding a plate with two fish, whilst several baskets of loaves lie on the ground before Him. Further to the right is the miracle at Cana, our blessed Lady and the servants having legends over their heads, —Η ΑΓΙΑ ΜΑΡΙΑ—ΤΑ ΠΑΙΔΙΑ—"HOLY MARY" and "THE SERVANTS;" and in the corresponding compartment on the other side are a certain number of persons seated at a feast, with a legend over their heads, ΤΑΣ ΕΥΛΟΓΙΑΣ ΤΟΥ ΧΥ ΕΣΘΙΟΝΤΕΣ,—"Eating the benedictions of Christ."

Now, this same word, which we have here translated *benedictions*, is the word used by St. Paul[1] when speaking of the Communion of the Body and Blood of Christ. The verb belonging to it is used by the Evangelists indifferently with the corresponding verb of the Eucharist, both in their account of the miracles of multiplication, and also of the institution of the Blessed Sacrament.[2] And it is the very word always used by St. Cyril of Alexandria (in whose city this painting is found) to denote the consecrated Bread and Wine; and when the devotion of the faithful waxed less fervent, and Communions became more rare, the same word was naturally retained, and has ever since continued, to denote the blest bread which was now received instead of It.[3]

[1] 1 Cor. x. 16.

[2] St. Matt. xiv. 29; xv. 36; xxvi. 26, 27. St. Mark vi. 41; xiv. 22. St. Luke ix. 16; xxii. 19. St. John vi. 11.

[3] On a little vessel of the fifth century, which may have been used for the reservation of the Blessed Sacrament, our Lord is represented with the rod in His hand before the water-pots at Cana, and the same word, *εὐλόγια*, is engraved above the scene. Its reference to the Holy Eucharist cannot be doubted. Bullettino, 1872, pp. 7, 21, tav. ii. 1.

Here, then, we have the evidence of the Christian artist himself, that the two miracles we have referred to were understood and used as "a kind of sacramental anticipation" (to use the words of St. Maximus)[1] "of the chalice of the New Testament." He brings together two events which were historically distinct, and unites them by means of the mysterious rite which they both foreshadowed. He even introduces into his composition an historical error, substituting St. Peter for St. Philip, thereby showing what was in his mind, viz., that the Apostles on that occasion were not to be considered personally, but rather prophetically, as St. Hilary[2] says, as types of those whose duty it should be in all future ages to distribute the true bread and wine, the Bread of Life and the cup of salvation. And he has thus furnished us with a most precious monument, proving the identity not only of Christian doctrine, but even of Christian artistic symbolism both in the East and West. We have shown the same truth elsewhere by an appeal to Epitaphs; we have shown that the same doctrines were expressed by the same forms in Rome and Alexandria, in France, in Egypt, and in Phrygia.[3] Every baptized Christian understood them, whether he lived on the banks of the Tiber or of the Po, of the Loire, the Euphrates, or the Nile. In all these parts of the world, writers in books, poets in hymns, preachers in sermons, artists in painting, the very masons themselves on the gravestones, made use of the fish in this symbolical sense, without a word of explanation. It is evident that, however unmeaning the figure may have been to Pagan eyes, or however strange it may seem to our own who are no longer familiar with it, it was as perfectly intelligible to contemporary Christians as the hieroglyphics of ancient Egypt to those who used them, or the letters of the English alphabet to Englishmen.

The same doctrine and the same symbolism in all parts of the Christian world.

[1] Hom. i. de Epiph.

[2] Comment. in Matt. xiv. 10, 11; Opera, tom. i. p. 740, ed. 1730.

[3] See Epitaphs of the Catacombs, pp. 134–136.

Summary of evidence, and importance of the conclusion.

We fear this discussion may have appeared somewhat long and tedious, perhaps, to some of our readers, or at any rate out of place, yet it was not possible to avoid it if we desired to show that we are building on solid foundations. For we have been accused of wishing to force upon the paintings of the Catacombs a meaning they will not bear, whereas we most sincerely desire to ascertain what their meaning really is; and we have thought the best means of doing this is to compare them with all that we know of the thoughts and feelings of those who executed them, or for whom they were executed. We have been accused of "attempting to connect the fish with the doctrine of Transubstantiation." What we have really done is to prove that when fish and bread were represented together on ancient Christian monuments, there was often intended a secret reference to the Holy Eucharist, of which the bread denotes the outward and visible form, the fish the inward and hidden reality, viz., Christ Jesus our Lord.

And the light which is thus acquired for the interpretation of Christian symbolism enables us to understand at once the language of other monuments, which, without it, would hardly have been intelligible. What is the meaning, for example, of the figures on the following gravestone, lately dug up in Modena, and

R.S., i. 350.

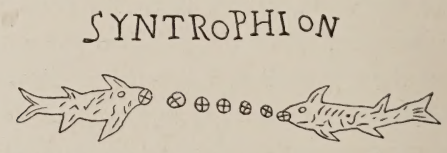


FIG. 12.—*Ancient Christian gravestone, dug up in Modena.*

supposed to belong to the third century? Nobody will believe that they were a mere idle conceit of the stonemason. It is possible they may have been intended merely as an historical reminiscence of one of our Lord's miracles. But it is certainly more probable, because more in harmony with what we now know of the modes of thought and forms of artistic speech which were in common use among the early Christians, that

they represent that heavenly Bread which is the supernatural food of the faithful. Again, on a sarcophagus of the fourth century, in the church of St. Trophimus, at Arles, there is the multiplication of the loaves and fishes; but opposite to Christ, as He works this miracle, is an altar on which lies a fish in a plate. Who can refuse to-day to recognise in this strange figure an allusion to the altar of the Eucharistic sacrifice and the secret meaning of the Christian hieroglyphic, the fish? Before the recent discoveries, this was only a conjecture of acute and learned antiquarians, who were convinced by the frequent union of these symbols that there existed some reciprocal relation between them; but the pictures which have come to light in the Catacomb of St. Callixtus leave no room for doubt.

FIG. 13.—*Lamb carrying the milk-pail, repeated in each corner of the roof of a chamber in the Catacomb of SS. Peter and Marcellinus.*

FIG. 14.—*Milk-pail and shepherd's crook by side of lamb from Catacomb of Domitilla.*

In the beginning of this chapter we mentioned another painting as having probably been intended to be a symbol of the same subject. It is a painting on one of the side walls of the same chamber in which the fish is represented bearing a basket on its back; and it consists of a milk-pail resting on a

Lamb carrying milk-pail;

kind of altar between two sheep,[1] and the same instrument may be seen in the next chamber, on the right-hand side of the Good Shepherd. It appears also in other places, either by his side or in his hands. In these latter instances, it might not unreasonably be taken as merely one of the ornamental accessories of pastoral life, inserted without any religious signification, but its position in the other example seems to indicate something more important. So also when we find it, as in some most ancient pictures in the Cemetery of Domitilla, suspended from the pastoral staff and by the side of the lamb; or, as in a later painting in the Cemetery of SS. Peter and Marcellinus, resting on the back of the lamb itself, we are reminded of the undoubted fact that milk was often used as a symbol of the Holy Eucharist.[2] Indeed, the lamb carrying the milk-pail on its own back seems exactly analogous to the fish carrying the bread; and the reader will observe that, in Fig. 13, it is the vessel which is surrounded by the *nimbus*, and not the lamb.

R.S., i. 348.

Fig. 15.—*Lamb carrying milk-pail. From Cemetery of Priscilla.*

similarly interpreted by the Acts of St. Perpetua,

The Acts of St. Perpetua[3]—universally accepted as a genuine document of the beginning of the third century—describe, as a part of the vision by which that saint was consoled and strengthened in prison, the Good Shepherd appearing to her, milking his flock, and giving her to eat some of the curds of the milk which he had drawn. "She received them with hands crossed upon one another, and all the people answered, Amen,"—just the word and the action then used in partaking of the Holy Eucharist. She understood that what she had seen was meant to be a symbol of this, for she at once concluded from it that her martyrdom was

[1] Fig. 8 in page 53.

[2] Buonarroti, Vetri, 32; Garrucci, Vetri, 62, 63, ed. 2da.

[3] Apud Ruinart, ed. Verona, p. 32.

imminent, because it was by this Blessed Sacrament that the Church always strengthened the martyrs for their last conflict. Something of the same kind occurs also in other ancient Acts. The old commentators point out that the good things of the Gospel are foretold by the prophets, sometimes under the figure of flesh, sometimes of wine, sometimes of milk, but all having reference to the same adorable mystery which is the Gospel feast *par excellence.*

Still more distinctly, Clement of Alexandria[1] says that "the Church nurses her children with holy milk; and that this milk is the child fair and comely, the Body of Christ which nourishes the young brood. . . . 'Eat My flesh and drink My Blood,' He says. Such is the suitable food which the Lord ministers, and He offers His flesh and pours forth His Blood, and nothing is wanting for the children's growth." And St. Irenæus[2] says, that whereas "Christ might easily have come to us in His immortal glory, we could not have endured its greatness; wherefore, being the perfect bread of the Father, He offered Himself to us as milk, because we were like infants. He did this when He appeared as man, that we, being nourished, as it were, from the breast of His flesh, and having by such a course of milk-diet become accustomed to eat and drink the Word of God, may be able also to contain in ourselves the Bread of immortality, which is the Spirit of the Father." It is clear that the thoughts of both these writers, when speaking of the Divine condescension as manifested in the Incarnation, run upon milk as the natural food of infants, and the Holy Eucharist as the supernatural food of Christians, as two cognate ideas; and it is precisely in the same sense, therefore, that we understand the use of the same symbol in ancient Christian art.

by Clement of Alexandria,

Irenæus,

We will add yet one more witness to the meaning of this

[1] Pædag., lib. i., c. vii. In translation of Ante-Nicene Library, pp. 138, 145.

[2] C. Hæres., iv. 38. 1. In Ante-Nicene Library, vol. ii. p. 42.

and Augustine,

symbol, though he belongs to a later date; but his authority is very great, and he only repeats in a more distinct and elaborate manner the tradition which we have already seen in the writings of earlier Fathers. St. Augustine is commenting on the title of the thirty-third Psalm,[1] which refers to an incident in the life of David, not exactly as it is recorded in the historical books: that is to say, in the Book of Kings the incident is told of one person, and in the title of the Psalm it seems to be attributed to another. And the Saint argues that this change of name has not been made without a reason. He inquires, therefore, into the mystical meaning of the whole incident, which he maintains it certainly *must* have, whether we can discover it or not, because every other part of the history of the Jewish people has such a meaning; and he appeals to his hearers as knowing this fact as well as he does. He specifies amongst other details of Jewish story which foreshadowed mysteries of the Christian Church, the manna, the passage through the Red Sea, and the striking of the rock.

He then speaks of David slaying the giant Goliath, as a type of Christ killing Satan:—"But what is Christ who slew Satan? It is humility slaying pride. When then I speak to you, my brethren, of Christ, it is humility that is specially commended to you. For He made a way to us by humility. . . . God was made humble, that so the pride of the human race might not disdain to follow the footsteps of God." And he continues immediately as follows:—"But there was, as you know, in former times a sacrifice of the Jews according to the order of Aaron, with victims of cattle; and this, too, was in a mystery, because, as yet, there was not the sacrifice of the Body and Blood of the Lord, which the faithful know and those who have read the Gospels; which sacrifice is now spread abroad throughout the whole world. Put, then, before your eyes those two sacrifices; the former one accord-

[1] Enarrat., 1ma in Ps. xxxiii., tom. iv. p. 301, ed. Gaume.

ing to Aaron, and this one according to Melchisedec. For it is written, 'The Lord swore, and will not repent; Thou art a priest for ever according to the order of Melchisedec.' Of whom is this said, 'Thou art a priest for ever according to the order of Melchisedec?' Of our Lord Jesus Christ. But who was Melchisedec"? Then, after giving the history of Melchisedec, and calling particular attention to his priesthood, to the blessing which he gave to Abraham, and to his having brought forth bread and wine, he continues, "The sacrifice of Aaron, then, is taken away, and the sacrifice according to the order of Melchisedec has begun to be. . . . Our Lord Jesus Christ has willed our salvation to be in His Body and Blood. But whence has He commended to us His Body and Blood? From His humility; for except He were humble, He would not be eaten and drunk. Consider His greatness: 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.' Behold this everlasting food; but food for Angels. Angels eat of it, and the powers above, and heavenly spirits; and eating, they are filled and satisfied; yet, that which satisfies and gladdens them still remains whole. But what mortal could approach that food? Whence could he have a heart suitable for such food? It was necessary that that food should be made milk (*mensa illa lactesceret*), and so come to little ones.

who speaks of the sacrifice of the Body and Blood of Christ,

"But how does meat become milk? How is meat changed into milk, unless it first be passed through flesh? And this is done by the mother. What the mother eats, the same is also eaten by the infant; but because the infant is not fit to eat bread, the mother changes the bread into her flesh (*ipsum panem mater incarnat*), and so feeds the infant on that very bread, through the lowliness of the breast and the juice of milk. How, then, has the Wisdom of God fed us on bread? 'Because the Word was made flesh, and dwelt in us.'

and the Holy Eucharist, under the symbol of milk.

"Behold then His humility; for man has eaten the bread

of Angels, as it is written, 'He gave them the bread of heaven; man ate the bread of Angels;'[1] that is, man has eaten of that Word whereon the Angels feed, and which is equal to the Father; for 'being in the form of God, He thought it not robbery to be equal with God.' The Angels feed on Him, but 'He debased Himself,' that man might eat the bread of Angels, 'taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men and in habit found as a man, He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross,' in order that from the Cross might be commended to us the new sacrifice, the Flesh and Blood of Christ."

It cannot be disputed, then, that the milk-pails to which we have called attention in early Christian monuments probably had a religious symbolical meaning, though we do not pretend to put this on the same level with the symbol of the bread and the fish; because the examples of the one symbol are comparatively rare, and its interpretation is supplied only by the language of a few, whereas the other was incessantly repeated in every variety of combination, and its meaning is attested by a vast multitude of authorities.

Other symbols.

We have now enumerated the principal symbols which formed the basis of Christian decorative art, as displayed in the Catacombs; and we shall have occasion to describe some of the compositions in which they appear, in a future chapter; there still remain a few other symbols which entered occasionally into the cycle; but of these the interpretation is for the most part so simple, that it is hardly necessary to adduce testimony in its support. We will briefly mention two or three of them.

The Dolphin.

First, there was the dolphin, which, according to the fabulous stories that were told about it in ancient times, might almost be considered, as Cardinal Pitra says, "a natural type of the Saviour of the world."[2] Athenæus calls it "most

[1] Ps. lxxvii. 24.

[2] Spic. Solesm., iii. 519.

loving of men," φιλανθρωπότατος;[1] and hence, both in Greek and Roman sculpture, it was a very favourite image on Pagan sepulchres; dolphins swimming on the surface of the water were by no means uncommon, as a symbol of happy souls swimming to the isles of the blest; and both in Christian paintings and on the sarcophagi, they are to be seen bound to a trident, or in connection with an anchor or some other object belonging to the sea. Some persons have imagined that this traditional use of the dolphin was the real origin of the conventional Christian symbol of the fish, which has been already explained. But the careful study of the chronology

Bullettino, 1869, 16. *R.S.*, ii. 358.

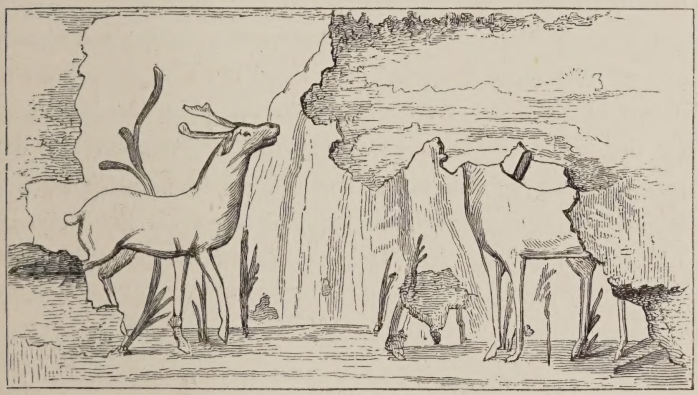


FIG. 16.—*Stags drinking, from the Cemetery of St. Callixtus.*

of our monuments entirely destroys all foundation for this conjecture; the dolphin was certainly represented by Christians at one time in preference to any other species of fish; but this preference is not manifested in any of the earliest paintings; *e.g.*, the fish carrying the basket of bread is certainly not a dolphin, neither is the fish of "the sacramental chambers," as they are called.

Another symbol was the stag, slaking its thirst at the streams of water which flow forth from the mystical mount of God, wherein David has taught us to see an emblem of

The Stag. *Bullettino*, 1865, 11.

[1] Athenæus, xiii. 30, apud Spic. Solesm., iii. 519.

the human soul panting after God during its exile in this valley of tears. This, too, does not appear among the more ancient paintings. We give a specimen of one of the very few representations of this subject that we are acquainted with in the Catacombs. It is a work of the fourth century, and belongs to the extreme limits of the Cemetery of St. Callixtus. When this scene was represented in the mosaics of the apses of the Basilicas, and on the sculptured sarcophagi of the same period, either Christ Himself, or some emblem of Him, such as the Lamb, or the Cross, stands on the top of the mount; and perhaps some such figure was here also. If so, it must have been the lamb; there is no room for any other.

Ship.

On some gravestones we see a ship approaching a harbour, and are of course reminded of a Christian soul attaining the haven of its rest. Sometimes also the ship stands clearly for the whole Christian Church;[1] which, though it may be much tossed by the waves and driven to and fro by the winds, yet is never submerged, and preserves in safety all who remain in her. In two instances the ship is represented

R.S., ii. 317.

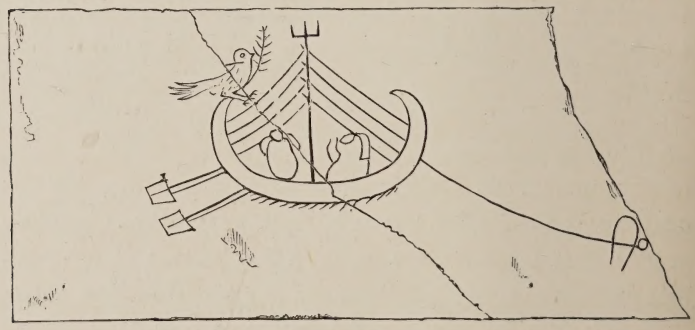


FIG. 17.—*Boat, laden with vessels (souls), guided by the Holy Spirit as a dove.*

with the cross for her standard,[2] guided by the Holy Spirit under the form of a dove, whilst its precious freight of souls

[1] St. Maximus of Turin. Hom. i. p. 154; Hom. lxxxix. p. 642; ed. Romæ.

[2] On the use of the trident as a disguised form of the Cross, see De Rossi's Roma Sotterranea, ii. 317.

is figured under the very homely guise of *amphoræ*, or vessels of various kinds. These figures appear also, of various shapes, on a large number of gravestones; and their symbolical meaning is declared by a written epitaph found in the Catacombs of Cyriaca which says DIONISI VAS ☧. As Dionysius is here called "a vessel of Christ," we have a right to conclude that the same meaning was intended when, instead of the word being written, the object itself was drawn. And we call to mind the words of our Lord addressed to Ananias concerning St. Paul, viz., that he was "a vessel of election to carry His name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel;"[1] also the words of St. Paul himself,[2] in which, after using, in illustration of his argument, the figure of a potter making out of the same lump of clay "one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour," he speaks of wicked men as "vessels of wrath," and the good as "vessels of mercy." The same language is used also by some of the early Christian writers;[3] but Lactantius, Prudentius, and St. Jerome[4] apply it to the bodies rather than to the souls of men, as though the soul had been temporarily detained in the vessel of the body, so that when the vessel is broken, the soul is delivered. St. Paulinus of Nola, too, if he is the author of the metrical epitaph of Cynesius, in the Basilica of St. Felix, has the same idea, saying of men's souls at the general resurrection, that they will return to their own vessels (*rursum in sua vasa redibunt*).

Amphora, or Vase.

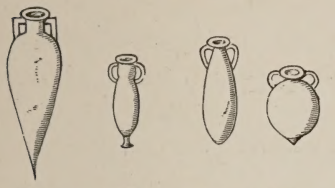


FIG. 18.—*Different forms of vessels on gravestones in the Catacombs.*

Bullettino, 1867, 27. *R.S.*, ii. 325.

[1] Acts ix. 15. [2] Romans ix. 22, 23.

[3] Tertullian de Patient. c. x. St. Ephrem, Orat. in St. Basil. St. Pacian ad Symp. ep. iii. § 26.

[4] Anima, fracto vase testaceo, erumpet. St. Hier. Epist. 23 ad Marcellam. Lactant. de Div. Inst. ii. 12. Prudent. Peristeph. v. 301–304.

CHAPTER II.

LITURGICAL PAINTINGS.

Specimen of symbolical paintings, illustrating the Sacraments of Baptism and the Holy Eucharist, executed in the third century—General description of them—Explained by the writings of Tertullian and others—Moses striking the rock—Fisherman—Act of Baptism—Paralytic carrying his bed—Bread and fish—Act of consecration—Feast of seven disciples by Lake of Tiberias—Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac—Resurrection of Lazarus—Other liturgical scenes elsewhere—Union of same subjects in later paintings more historical than symbolical.

Paintings partly symbolical, partly Biblical, but essentially liturgical.

THE paintings of which we are to give an account in the present chapter do not really differ in kind from those which were described in the last, or those which will be brought before us in the next. In truth, some of them are highly symbolical, others Biblical. Nevertheless, they are so carefully selected and skilfully combined, with reference to the Sacraments of Baptism and the Holy Eucharist, that they well deserve the name which we have given them of liturgical, and the chambers in which they are found are known to all visitors of the Catacombs as the chambers of the sacraments.

It might have been thought that the impenetrable secrecy which in ancient times shrouded the sacred mysteries from the gaze and knowledge of the profane, would have rendered any sensible representation of them by art on the walls of the Catacombs quite impossible. But it must be remembered that these paintings were executed at a time when the invasion of the subterranean cemeteries by the heathen had not yet taught the necessity of caution. Moreover, by a clever use of Christian symbolism, and a mixture of things natural and supernatural, simple and allegorical, the artist has contrived to produce a work which, whilst eminently liturgical in character, and plain

enough and of the highest interest and value to us, yet to an uninitiated stranger must always have been absolutely unintelligible. The administration of Baptism, for example, is mixed up with Biblical histories and allegories of various kinds; and the consecration of the Holy Eucharist is both complicated by means of the hieroglyphic sign of the fish, and also veiled under various historical scenes taken from the Old and New Testaments.

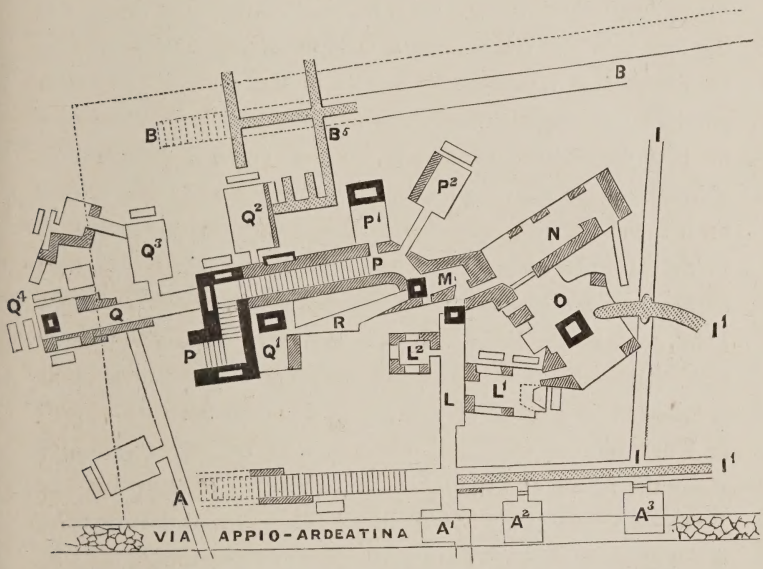


FIG. 19.—*Plan of Papal Crypt, L. Crypt of St. Cecilia, O, and Chapels of the Sacraments, A^2, A^3.*

These paintings deserve to be examined in the most minute detail. They are to be found in that series of *cubicula* in the immediate neighbourhood of the Papal crypt, concerning which it has been already shown [1] that they were all made about the same time; the oldest, perhaps before the end of the second century, the latest, certainly at no very advanced period in the third. In three of them, the paintings are too much destroyed to enable us to recognise all their details; but as far as we can judge from the fragments which remain, they were of the same

[1] See Part I., page 401.

subjects, and of the same general character with those of the two oldest chambers, which we propose to describe.

Plan A_3. We will first set before our readers a plan of one of the chambers, which will enable them more easily to understand the relative position of the subjects, and the general arrangement of the whole, which is the same in all; and then we will proceed to examine one or two more closely in detail.

General description of them. On the wall, at the left of the door as we enter (*a*), is the figure of a man striking a rock, whence water gushes forth. On Plate XV. 2. the first side wall (*b*), we see a man fishing, and then another man baptizing a youth who stands in the same water. The Plate XV. 3. paralytic carrying his bed on his shoulder concludes the series on that side of the chamber. On the principal wall, or that which faces the doorway (*c*), we see a three-legged table, having on it bread and fish, with a woman standing on one side of it Plate XVI. 3. in the attitude of prayer; and a man on the other, clad only in the *pallium*, extending his hands, and especially his right hand, towards the table in such a way as to force upon every Christian intelligence the idea of the act of consecration. This Plate XVII. is followed by a scene of seven men sitting at table with bread and fish before them, and eight baskets of loaves arranged along the floor; and then Abraham about to offer up his son PlateXVIII.1. Isaac—a scene easily identified by the ram and the faggot of wood at their side. These three scenes are painted, side by side, on the interval between two graves; and they are flanked at either extremity by a full-length figure of a *fossor*, with his left arm extended and a pickaxe resting on his right shoulder.[1] The painting on the third side of this chamber (*d*) has perished, all the plaster having fallen to the ground and been reduced to dust. But the plaster of the small recess on the right-hand side of the doorway is still perfect, and shows us two figures, not standing side by side, but one placed on a higher level than the other (probably in consequence of the narrowness of the

[1] In Plate XVIII, 3, 4, we have given representations of *fossors* in the act of working, taken from other chambers of this series.

2.

3.

4.

space). One of these is a man seated, who might be supposed to be teaching from a long roll, probably of parchment, which he holds in his hands; the other seems to be drawing water from a well which is already overflowing.

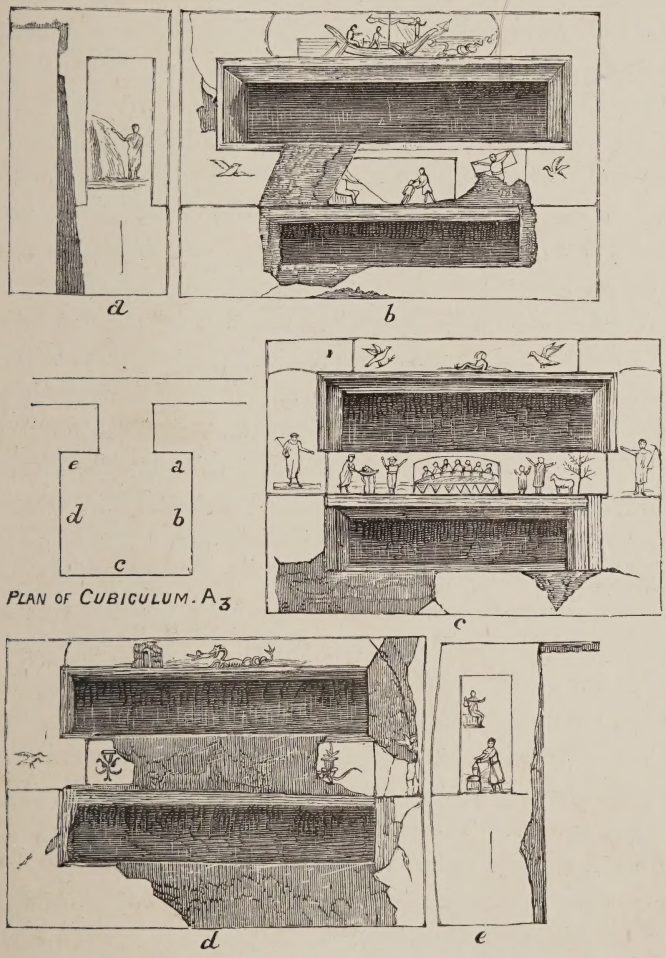


FIG. 20.—*Plan of one of the Chambers of the Sacraments.*

In the second chamber, we find the rock, the fisherman, the feast of seven, the baptism, and the sitting teacher, much the same as before, only with some variation of detail, *e.g.*, the Plan A_2.

water from the rock forms the river in which the fisherman is fishing (see Plate XV. 1). On the right-hand wall, which in the former chamber was in ruins, we distinguish the raising of Lazarus from the dead; and whilst on one side of the doorway is a preacher standing, the fragments of plaster found on the other show that a *fossor* had once been represented there.

It has been already mentioned that the same subjects, with more or less of variation, appear to have been reproduced in the other chambers of this series. Such frequent repetition naturally suggests the presence of some hidden sense; and it will be worth our while to explain with some minuteness what that sense is, deriving our information as far as possible from the testimony of contemporary writers.

Their meaning explained by Tertullian in his treatise *De Baptismo.*

A single author, Tertullian, who was in Rome about the time that these paintings were executed, and can hardly fail to have seen them, can be made to supply all, or nearly all the guidance that is needed for their interpretation. Let us look into his treatise upon Baptism, and see how he handles the subject.

Summary of that treatise.

He begins by bringing together all that Holy Scripture contains about water; and he does this with such minuteness of detail, that he is presently obliged to check himself, saying that, if he were to pursue the subject through all Holy Scripture with the same fulness with which he had begun, men would say he was writing a treatise in praise of water rather than of Baptism. From the first chapter of the Book of Genesis to the last of the Evangelists, and even of the Apocalypse, he finds continual testimony to the high dignity and sacramental life-giving power of this element. The Spirit of God, he says, moved over it at the first; whilst as yet the earth was void and empty, and darkness was upon the face of the deep, and the heavens were as yet unformed, water alone, already pure, simple, and perfect, supplied a worthy resting-place on which God could be borne. The division of the waters was the regulating power by which the world was constituted; and when at length the world was set in order, ready to receive inhabitants, the waters were the

first to hear and obey the command and to bring forth creatures having life. Then, again, man was not made out of the dry earth, but out of slime, after a spring had risen out of the earth, watering all its surface.

All this he gathers out of the first two chapters of Genesis, and here he makes a pause, breaking into that apology which has been already mentioned. Then he resumes the thread of his discourse, but passes much more briefly over the remainder of the Old Testament. He notes how the wickedness of the old world was purged by the waters of the Deluge, which was the world's Baptism; how the waters of the Red Sea drowned the enemies of God's people and delivered them from a cruel bondage; and how the children of Israel were refreshed during their wanderings through the wilderness by the water which flowed continuously from the rock that followed them, "and the rock was Christ."

Then he comes to the New Testament, and briefly but eloquently exclaims: "Nowhere is Christ found without water. He is Himself baptized with it. He inaugurates in it the first manifestation of His Divine power at the wedding-feast in Cana. When He preaches the Gospel, on the last and great day of the feast He stands and cries, saying, 'If any man thirst, let him come to Me and drink.' He sums up His whole gift to man under the image of a fountain of water, telling the Samaritan woman that He has living water to give, which shall become in him that receives it a fountain of water springing up unto life everlasting. When He gives instruction upon charity, He instances a cup of cold water given to a disciple; He sits down weary at a well and asks for water to refresh Himself; He walks on the waves of the sea, and washes His disciples' feet; finally" (Tertullian concludes), "this testimony of Jesus to the sacrament of Baptism continues even to the end, to His very Passion; for, when He is condemned to the cross, water is not absent—witness the hands of Pilate; nay, when wounded after death upon the cross,

water bursts forth from His side—witness the soldier's spear."

There may be something in this symbolism that sounds strange to modern ears; but, as we have said before, we have nothing to do with its merits or demerits, but only with the fact of its general use by ancient commentators on Holy Scripture, whence we have every right to suppose that Christian artists would have used it also.

St. Cyprian uses the same imagery.

We will only quote one other witness, a fellow-countryman of Tertullian's, and writing fifty years later, whose frequent correspondence with Rome would have made him specially familiar with the traditional teaching of that Church, whether addressed to the ear or the eye. St. Cyprian agrees with Tertullian in identifying the water which flowed from the rock in the wilderness with the waters of Baptism; he says that there is but one fount of water in Holy Church, which makes us the sheep of Christ;[1] and in another place,[2] that it was foretold that if the Jews would thirst and seek after Christ, they should drink with us Christians, *i.e.*, should obtain the grace of Baptism. "If they should thirst in the desert," says Isaias (xlviii. 21), "He will lead them out: He will bring forth water out of the rock for them, and cleave the rock, and My people shall drink." "And this was fulfilled in the Gospels" (St. Cyprian continues), "when Christ, who is the Rock, is cleft with the stroke of the lance in His Passion; Who, reminding them of what had been foretold by the prophet, cried aloud and said, 'If any man thirst, let him come and drink; he that believeth in Me, as the Scripture saith, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.' And that it might be made still more clear that the Lord spoke here about Baptism, the Evangelist has added, 'Now this He said of the Spirit, which they should receive who believed in Him;' for the Holy Spirit is received by Baptism."

Such was the language of Christian writers in the third

[1] Epist. lxxi. [2] Epist. lxiii. 8.

century; and the artist who painted the chambers which we are examining, did but repeat the same lesson in his own way, when he painted first the figure of Moses striking the rock, whence the waters gushed forth for the refreshment of the children of Israel; next, a man engaged in fishing, the Divinely-chosen emblem of the Apostolic ministry; and lastly, another man engaged in the very act of pouring water over the head of a youth. Surely no one can doubt that the Christian sacrament of Baptism stands here plainly revealed, yet in a manner veiled, under the "typical parallelisms" (to use Lord Lindsay's expressive phrase) of the Old Law, and of certain symbolical actions of common life.

Many persons are of opinion that the same mystery is again set forth in the next painting, the paralytic carrying his bed. Those who have ever visited the (so-called) Catacomb of St. Agnes with Father Marchi, will remember that he used always to identify this painting with the sacrament of Penance, supposing it to refer to the man that was healed at Capharnaum, to whom our Lord addressed those words, "Be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee;" and, indeed, that miracle is expressly quoted in the Apostolical Constitutions as symbolical of this sacrament. It is objected, however, that it would have been out of harmony with the prevailing tone of thought and practice among the Christians of the days of persecution, that grievous sin and repentance should have been represented as a probable interlude between the sacraments of Baptism and the Holy Eucharist. De Rossi, therefore, considers it far more probable that all the paintings on this wall were intended to have reference to Baptism (just as all those on the next speak clearly of the Holy Sacrament of the Altar); and that we must understand this picture, as representing that other miracle wrought on a paralytic at the pool of Bethsaida, which Tertullian, Optatus,[1] and others, have interpreted as typical of the healing waters of Baptism.

The paralytic carrying his bed, typical of Baptism, or perhaps of Penance.

Plate XV. 3.

[1] Tert. De Baptismo, c. 5; Optat. De Schism. Don. ii. 6.

Father Garrucci, on the other hand, thinks differently, and insists on the correctness of Father Marchi's interpretation. He urges in support of his opinion, that the artist has distinctly cut off the paralytic from the subjects which have reference to Baptism, by placing him outside the lines within which the fisherman and the act of baptizing are enclosed.

For ourselves, we can quite understand the repugnance felt by De Rossi and others, to supposing that the artist intended to set before a Christian congregation in those days the idea of a probable loss of the supernatural life once received. "We speak of God's pardons," says a Christian writer of the fourth[1] century, "not to those who are in the enjoyment of His grace, but to those unhappy men who have lost it; we reveal this secret, not before sin has been committed, but after it." On the other hand, we know that there were *lapsi* in all ages, and that there were special reasons, even at this very time, why "the second plank" of penance should be set prominently before those who had thus made shipwreck of the faith. We can understand, therefore, why the rulers of the Church should have made use of the figure of the paralytic carrying his bed as a consoling memorial of the gracious goodness of God Who had "given such power unto men"—"power on earth to forgive sins." On the whole, then, we think that it must always remain doubtful to which miracle, and therefore to which sacrament, this picture would be more properly referred; whether to the man who was healed at the pool of Bethsaida, in which case the waters of Baptism would be understood, or to him who was brought to our Lord, lying in a bed, and to whom He said, "Be of good heart, thy sins are forgiven thee," thereby foreshadowing the sacrament of Penance. In either case, the painting is not out of place in the series; it is sacramental, at least, if not liturgical, in character.

We will pass on to the next three pictures, which form a group by themselves, most intimately connected with one

[1] Pacianus Epist. ad Sempron. i. 5.

another, and following upon what has gone before (in whichever sense it be taken) in strict theological sequence. It is exactly the same train of thought and combination of ideas which occur in the ancient epitaphs of St. Abercius and of Autun,[1] in both of which there is a natural and easy transition from the waters of Baptism to the heavenly Fish of the Holy Eucharist. Moreover, we must not forget that, according to the ecclesiastical discipline of those days, these two Sacraments followed one another much more closely than they do now; they were, in fact, often administered on the same day.

The next pictures denote the consecration and participation of the Holy Eucharist.

There are certain details, however, in the mode of representing the symbols of the Holy Eucharist in these paintings, which require a few words of additional explanation. Some persons, for instance, might take exception to that which we have called a picture of the consecration, in consequence of the insufficient clothing of the man we have supposed to be the priest. He is clad only in the *pallium*, and as he stretches out his hand over the table, his breast and arm, and one whole side of his body become much exposed.

Consecrating priest clothed in the *pallium* only.

The *pallium* was the characteristic dress of Greek philosophers, and especially of the Cynics. Whether it was ever adopted as the sacred dress of the Christian clergy is much disputed. Eusebius[2] mentions of Justin Martyr, that he "preached the Word of God in the dress of a philosopher;" but it is not certain that he was a priest. Before him, Aristides of Athens, and after him Tertullian, Heracles, a priest of Alexandria, Gregory Thaumaturgus, and others, did the same. Tertullian expressly defends and applauds, with his usual eloquence and subtlety, this mode of dress in his treatise "De Pallio."[3] He concludes with these words: "Rejoice, O

[1] See Epitaphs of the Catacombs, pp. 134–136.

[2] Hist. Eccl. iv. 11. See also the opening of Justin's Dialogue with Trypho.

[3] See note at beginning of Oehler's edition of this treatise; Leipsic, 1853, tom. i. 913. Also St. Hieron. Ep. lxxxiii., ad Magnum. Catal. Hom. Ill. cxx. *Humerum exertus*, is the very word used by Tertullian, c. 3.

Pallium, and exult; a better philosophy claims thee now, since thou hast become the vestment of a Christian." But this does not prove that it was worn at the altar; and Father Garrucci and others are very confident that it was not. He maintains, therefore, that in the picture before us it is not any individual priest in the act of consecration that is here represented, but rather the whole Christian priesthood idealised as the appointed teacher of mankind.

When Faith is personified by Prudentius in his "Psychomachia," he paints her as coming down to do battle with idolatry, attired almost in the very same way as the man before us. He represents her as carried away by the eagerness of her zeal, and descending into the arena but imperfectly clad, with bare arms and shoulders, and other limbs uncovered.[1]

St. Cyprian, who lived about fifty years later than Tertullian, denounced the vainglorious immodesty of the bare breast of the heathen philosophers,[2] and spoke of Christian teachers, by way of contrast, as being philosophers not in words but in deeds, not making any outward show of wisdom by their dress, but holding it in truth. And Minucius Felix had made the same remark, saying that "we manifest our wisdom not in the outward dress but by the mind." The Council of Gangra (A.D. 340) pronounced an anathema against those who, through a supposed exercise of piety, used the *pallium*, as if thereby they possessed justice, and dared to condemn others who with modesty used the finer dress of their neighbours. Pope Damasus, too, condemned it, as being the dress in which all the statues of the heathen gods are represented.[3] Nearly a hundred years later, Pope Celestine (A.D. 428) condemned

[1] "Agresti turbida cultu,
Nuda humeros, intonsa genas, *exserta lacertos*,
... nec telis meminit nec tegmine cingi,
Pectore sed fidens valido, *membrisque retectis*."—Vv. 21–25.

[2] De Bono Patientiæ, § 2, 3. "Exerti ac seminudi pectoris inverecunda jactantia."

[3] Rom. Pont. Epist., p. 536.

very severely certain bishops of Vienna and the South of France, because they "follow a superstitious fashion, and contrary to the practice of the Church, gird their loins and wear the *pallium*, obeying the letter of Scripture rather than its spirit."[1]

All these later facts are of no direct value, as illustrating the sense in which a certain painting was designed in the third century. Incidentally, however, they are of some importance as testifying to the use of the *pallium* as a religious garment, if not an ecclesiastical one, in earlier times. They are evidence of a certain change of taste and feeling upon the subject which had come over the Christian mind between the beginning of the third century and the end of the fourth and the fifth; and in point of fact, almost all the later pictures of men, painted in the Catacombs, represent them as clothed with the tunic underneath the *pallium*. Thus the later *dicta* of the Church upon the subject seem to provide some sort of criterion as to the date of these paintings in San Callisto—a date which precisely agrees with the result to which we had been led before by a multitude of concurrent indications of a totally different kind.

The Church represented by a woman.

Another detail in these paintings which has been made the subject of some discussion, is the true meaning of the woman who stands opposite to the priest, with outstretched arms, in the attitude of prayer; whether she is intended to represent some deceased lady, buried in this chamber, or whether she does not rather stand as a symbol of the Church. Looking, however, at the whole character of this series of paintings, we cannot doubt that the latter interpretation is the more correct. Just as the person represented here as receiving Baptism is a mere boy, or very young man, not because the artist intended to denote some one determinate person who was really of that age, but because youth is the age of Baptism (and it was even customary to call neophytes, of whatever age they might be,

[1] Constant. Rom. Pont. Epist., p. 1066.

infantes or *pueri*);[1] so, in like manner, at the table of the tremendous mysteries, a woman was represented, not because it was desired to do honour to any particular lady whose tomb might be near, but rather because, when the whole body of the faithful was spoken of, it was most usual to speak of them under this figure.

Both in the Epistles of St. Paul and in the writings of the most ancient Fathers, the Church is the Bride of Christ, without spot or wrinkle. A woman, therefore, became a very natural artistic symbol of the whole Church. Thus, in the old mosaics, *e.g.*, of Sta. Sabina in Rome, put up by Pope Celestine in the earlier half of the fifth century, the legends under two female figures expressly designate them as *Ecclesia ex Gentibus*, and *Ecclesia ex Circumcisione—i.e.*, the Church from the Gentiles and from the Jews; and it is certain that these mosaics preserved, with more or less of modification, the ancient artistic types rather than created new ones. Indeed, the tradition of this symbolical language was continued very long among Christian artists—*e.g.*, it occurs in liturgical illuminations of a Paschal candle in a MS. of the Barberini Library, belonging to the eleventh or twelfth century, and it is not an uncommon ornament in the carving of the portals of mediæval churches.

However, whether the female figure who stands here in prayer be really meant for the Church, for the personification of faith, or for some one Christian soul, is comparatively unimportant. It is her position and occupation which command our attention. She is praying by the side, and in the presence of, the Blessed Sacrament, thereby reminding us of the words of St. Cyril,[2] "that those prayers are most prevailing which are made with the consecrated gifts lying open to view."

Of the seven men who follow next, seated together, and partaking of bread and fish, we have already spoken at some

[1] See Epitaphs of the Catacombs, p. 130.

[2] Lect. xxiii. 9, Oxf. Trans. 275.

length; but we must add here, in answer to a German critic who would fain transfer the reference from the Blessed Sacrament to the eternal banquet in heaven, first, that the mere uniformity in all these paintings of the number and sex of the guests, would alone suffice to distinguish them from the representations either of the *agapæ* or of the joys of paradise. Specimens are not wanting of either of these subjects, and in both of them women appear as well as men, and in varying numbers.

The feast of the seven disciples by the Sea of Tiberias. Plate XVII.

Moreover, the position and adjuncts of the feast in these particular chambers seem absolutely to determine its sense. In one instance, where the two scenes are compressed into a single wall of the chamber, it stands side by side with the representation of Baptism. In another, where a type or figure of each Sacrament is joined with its literal representation, as the fishing is next to the baptism, so the consecration of the Holy Eucharist is next to this entertainment. To doubt, then, of its application to the Sacrament of the Altar, especially when we remember how universally the history was so interpreted by ancient Christian teachers, seems a wilful closing of our eyes against the truth, and can only be accounted for by the rejection of the ancient doctrine which the symbol expresses.

The sacrifice of Isaac typical of the holy sacrifice of the Mass. Plate XVIII. 1.

We have seen that after the paintings of the fishing and the baptizing, there followed, on the same wall, the paralytic, which is therefore, with great probability, referred to the same Sacrament. Here also upon this wall is a third scene, that of Abraham and Isaac,[1] which, in like manner, must be connected with the Holy Eucharist; and although the same German critic, already referred to, finds a difficulty in accepting a figure of the Bloody Sacrifice on the cross as a suitable

[1] Both are represented as praying,—a faggot and the ram behind them alone enable us to identify them. Eight or ten frescoes of the same subject from the Catacombs are given by Garrucci in his "Storia dell' Arte Cristiana."

figure also of the unbloody sacrifice on the altar,[1] his scruples will scarcely be considered conclusive, even by his co-religionists. For surely the sacrifice of Isaac by his father might, in some respects, claim to be considered a more lively type of the sacrifice of the Mass than of the sacrifice on Mount Calvary; since, although, as St. Paul twice repeats, Abraham "offered up his only-begotten son," yet the blood of Isaac was not really shed; he was only "as it were slain."[2] Abraham "received him from the dead for a parable."[3] The offering, then, of Isaac by his father is frequently sculptured on the Christian sarcophagi of the fourth and fifth centuries, together with other Biblical stories prefiguring the priesthood and sacrifice of the New Law. Here it is the pendant, so to speak, to that other picture already described, wherein the priest is consecrating; "filling the place of Christ," as St. Cyprian[4] speaks, "imitating what Christ did, offering a true and perfect sacrifice in the Church to God the Father."

The series concludes with the resurrection of Lazarus.

Not a vestige remains of the principal subject which was painted on the remaining wall, opposite to the paintings of Baptism. Nevertheless, we have ventured with confidence to supply it from the corresponding picture in the next chamber. It was the resurrection of Lazarus, which to the Christians of that age would have seemed the most natural, and almost necessary, complement to representations of the Holy Eucharist. Not only did the language, which Our Blessed Lord made use of on occasion of that miracle, bear a very striking resemblance to parts of His discourse upon the Blessed Sacrament,[5] but He had also seemed to connect the resurrection to everlasting life in so special a manner with the eating of His flesh and drinking His blood, that the Fathers always speak of the one as a kind of pledge and earnest of the other. We may

[1] Yet it is expressly named in the Church's hymn, "Lauda Sion," *In figuris præsignatur, cum Isaac immolatur;* and in the Canon of the Mass it is named with the sacrifices of Abel and of Melchisedec.

[2] Apoc. v. 6.

[3] Heb. xi. 17, 19.

[4] Ep. ad Cæcil. 63, aliter 62.

[5] Cf. St. John xi. 25 with vi. 58, &c.

see from the language of Prudentius[1] how naturally the Christian mind passed from one of these subjects to the other; as when he suddenly stops in the midst of his reflections upon the multiplication of the loaves and fishes, bearing upon their relation to the Holy Eucharist, and then, as though he feared that he was in danger of revealing secrets forbidden to profane ears, abruptly addresses himself to Lazarus, as the next subject of which it would naturally become him to speak. Jesus had said about the Blessed Sacrament, "He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood hath everlasting life, and I will raise him up in the last day." At the tomb of Lazarus He uttered those solemn words, "I am the resurrection and the life. He that believeth in Me, although he be dead, shall live; and every one that liveth and believeth in Me shall not die for ever."

It is to be observed that Lazarus is not here represented in the way in which he was usually represented in paintings of the latter part of the third and in the following centuries, viz., as an adult, and swathed like a mummy just emerging from the tomb, but rather as a youth, having the winding sheet hanging loosely about his person, as though more distinctly to mark him as an ideal and allegorical, and not an historical personage.

It is not necessary that we should draw out at length the hidden sense of that series of paintings of the history of Jonas, with which the upper part of these walls is covered; their bearing on the trials of this present life and the hope of a future one is sufficiently obvious. But the reader will observe that this historical series of paintings, as we may call them, are kept quite distinct from the more mystical series, which form the principal part of the decoration of the chamber.

Scenes from the history of Jonas. Plate XIX. 1, 2, 3.

[1] Bis sex appositi, cumulatim qui bona Christi
Servarent, gravidis procul ostentata canistris—
Sed quid ego hæc autem titubanti voce retexo,
Indignus qui tanta canam? procede sepulcro
Lazare. Dic, cujus vocem tellure sub imâ
Audieris, &c.—*Apotheosis*, 740–745.

Supplementary paintings of doctors and *fossors* explained.

There remain, however, two other figures on which we ought to make some observations. One of them is seated,

FIG. 21.—*The Raising of Lazarus. From the Cemetery of SS. Peter and Marcellinus. Bosio*, p. 387.

FIG. 22.—*The Raising of Lazarus. From Sacramental Chamber A*[3].

apparently in the act of unrolling a volume, or, at least, holding a long roll of parchment in his hands; the other stands,

drawing water from a well which is already overflowing. In the next chamber, the same figure or figures appear, once standing, once sitting, but on both occasions holding a book, and seemingly engaged in the work of instruction, and wearing the same ascetic dress of Pagan philosophers as the priest whom we have spoken of as consecrating.

Our first impulse at sight of the well with its overflowing waters is to refer it to the conversation of our Blessed Lord with the Samaritan woman at the well,[1] wherein He promised to give water to them that believe in Him, such as should "become in them a fountain of water springing up unto life everlasting." And, doubtless, this would be a very beautiful and appropriate termination to a series of symbolical paintings, beginning with the stream of grace, drawn from the Rock of Christ, and now ending with the Well of Living Water and the promise of eternal life. It seems pretty clear, however, that the person at the well is a man, and not a woman. And a more careful consideration of the subject has led De Rossi to adopt another interpretation. He supposes this figure to represent a Christian doctor of the faith, either in the abstract, or some one individual, as Zephyrinus, or possibly Callixtus himself, who perhaps devised this whole symbolical series, and is then commemorated in them, just as the mere material workmen (the *fossors*) were also represented on the same walls. He takes the drawing of the water at the well to be only an expression in art of what Origen had said in words, when he speaks of "the Well whence spiritual waters are to be drawn for the refreshment of the believers;"[2] and that the reason for making use of these unusual memorials of individuals was the fact that this cemetery was the first which had belonged to the Church in her aggregate capacity.[3]

This same reason explains also the exceptional character of the whole system of decoration that was adopted in these

[1] St. John iv. 14; vii. 37, 38.
[2] Hom. XII. in Num., tom. ii. p. 311–314.
[3] See Part I., p. 144–146.

This whole series seems inspired by authority.

chambers. They form one uniform group, adorned with the same symbols and in the same style, freely changed in their composition and arrangement, yet constant in their hidden meaning and theological sense; whereas in all the other *cubicula* of the same area there is no trace of the same system of decoration. It may well be doubted whether any private individuals would have ventured on such bold representations of the sacred mysteries for the adornment of their family vaults; neither would every artist have had sufficient theological knowledge to design them. On many accounts, therefore, they seem to bear the stamp of authority; they almost read like an official summary of Christian doctrines, a short catechism addressed to the eye; and they are certainly one of the most interesting monuments of ancient Christian art that have come down to us.

Gradual abandonment of the more mystical symbols.

Before taking leave of them, there is one more remark which they suggest, that is worth recording, with reference to the order in which the several classes of paintings succeeded one another in the development of Christian art. It is certain that these chambers were excavated in the very earliest period of the third century, if not in the end of the second; and there can be no doubt that the paintings were executed at the same time, and, as we have said, the same subjects (in the main) were painted in all of them. But it has been shown in our analytical examination of the process of making this portion of the Cemetery of St. Callixtus, that three of the chambers, A^4, A^5, A^6, were made in what we have called the second period of excavation, after the floor of the galleries had been lowered.

R.S., ii. 347.

And De Rossi points out that it is possible to trace a gradual decline of symbolism corresponding to the successive periods of excavation. In the first two chambers, A^2, A^3, the ancient symbols, and the use of signs which he calls merely hieroglyphic, reach their fullest development. In these, historical scenes from the Bible are mysteriously intertwined, or (to use his own word) compenetrated, with parables and sacramental rites. Here the fish appears on the Eucharistic table as a

secret sign of Christ, quite isolated, without any accessory, giving it the appearance of an historical memorial;—the seven baskets of bread are spread round the singular tripod of bread and fish, and are, in like manner, quite detached from any apparent historical reference. But in the somewhat later chambers of which we are now speaking, this mysterious language grows more faint and feeble, and the weakness increases

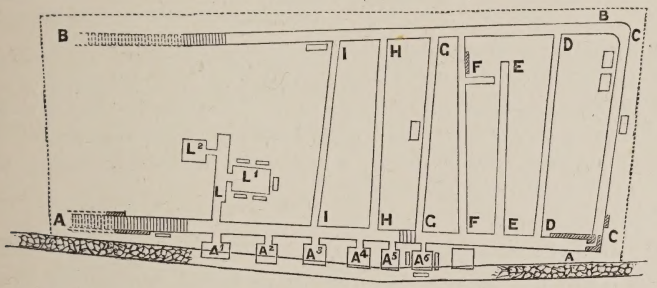


FIG. 23.—*Second Period of Excavation.*

according to the order of succession in which the topographical and architectural analysis of the chambers obliges us to arrange them. In A^6 the purely allegorical and hieroglyphical figures disappear. There is no fisherman, no baptism; but the Biblical stories, still preserving their ancient meaning, and represented according to the old mystical types, acquire a predominant importance. The scenes from the history of Jonas no longer occupy a higher space upon the walls, leaving the lower space to the uninterrupted representation of the Sacraments; but they are brought down and intermixed with the Sacramental pictures themselves, whilst the space they had occupied before is now filled with mere geometrical patterns and a few birds. In the next chamber, A^5, there is still greater elimination of the symbolical element. Ornamental heads, birds, and other devices of mere decoration prevail so much as to exclude Moses, Lazarus, and the greater part of the history of Jonas. And in A^4 the same tendency has gone still farther. Coloured lines and patterns, two fossors, two *oranti*, entirely usurp the place of the more secret and mysterious emblems.

CHAPTER III.

BIBLICAL PAINTINGS.

Biblical subjects treated symbolically, not according to historical truth—Noe's ark typical of the Church and the waters of Baptism—Jonas, of the Resurrection—Question of the gourd, or ivy—Form of the fish taken from the story of Andromeda—Daniel in the lions' den—Three Children in the fiery furnace—Adoration of the wise men—Moses striking the rock—Resurrection of Lazarus.

Biblical subjects treated symbolically, not historically;

AFTER what has been said in a former chapter,[1] our readers will not expect that they have heard the last of symbolism because we are now to speak of subjects taken out of Bible history. They already know that the ancient Christian artists did not select these subjects either for their own sakes as histories, nor for their artistic value as compositions, but for the sake of what was associated with them in the mind of the Church. They neither treated them accurately as facts of history, nor yet freely as subjects of the imagination, but strictly with a view to their moral or dogmatic signification. Hence they are generally represented in one uniform way. Religious dogma imparted some of its own fixedness of character to the art which it vouchsafed to employ; so that, with some slight modification, we might say of Christian art as exhibited in the Catacombs what was said many centuries later during the Iconoclast controversy, that "the making of pictures is not the invention of the artist, but the approved legislation and tradition of the Church; this tradition does not belong to the artist, only the execution belongs to him, the arrangement and disposition is of the holy Fathers."[2]

[1] See pages 43–49.

[2] Conc. Nic. ii., Actio vi., Collect. Labbe, tom. vii. fol. 831, 832.

The truth of these remarks will be more clearly seen when we have examined a few of the principal subjects in detail. Take, for example, the history of Noe. Of what an endless variety of compositions is not this subject capable, and how variously has it not been treated in all the schools of modern art? Yet throughout the whole range of the Roman Catacombs we find but one type of it, and that removed as far as possible from historical truth. Instead of a huge ark riding upon the waves, and containing eight persons, together with a vast multitude of living animals, we have a single individual almost filling the small box in which he stands, whilst a dove, bearing an olive-branch, flies towards him. The occupant of the ark is often a woman or child, instead of a man; and in one instance at least, on a sarcophagus in the Lateran Museum, the name JULIANE is added, *i.e.*, the name of the deceased on whose grave it was figured.

e.g., the ark of Noe, how represented.

R.S., ii. *Tav.* xlvii. 42.

FIG. 24.—*Noe in the Ark.*

This gives us a clue to the interpretation of the subject, the reason of its selection as a subject of painting; it was derived from Holy Scripture itself. St. Peter, in one of his Epistles,[1] had spoken of a certain resemblance between those eight souls who were "saved by water in the days of Noe, when the ark was a-building," and those Christians who are now "saved by baptism, being of the like form;" and some of the Fathers have drawn out the resemblance in all its details. As the waters of the Deluge cleansed the earth from all its iniquities, so (they say) the waters of Baptism cleanse the soul; so that St. Ambrose even says, that the Deluge was less a punishment for the world than a regenerating baptism for it.[2] As those only were saved who

The ark a symbol of the Church, the Deluge of Baptism.

[1] 1 Pet. iii. 20, 21.

[2] Serm. xxxi. De Rat. Quadrag.

took refuge in the ark, so now also the Lord "adds daily to the Church such as should be saved;" so that St. Cyprian[1] says, "If anybody could escape who was outside the ark, so may he escape who is outside the Church;" and St. Maximus of Turin,[2] "As the ark of Noe preserved safe amid the general destruction all those who were carried in it, so also the Church of Peter will preserve unhurt in the general conflagration all those whom it contains;" and these will be taken from among "all nations, and tribes, and peoples, and tongues," even as the ark also contained "of every living creature of all flesh, wherein was the breath of life."

We will add the testimony of yet one more witness, but this witness shall be very ancient, Tertullian, who has expressed this doctrine with his usual terseness in the following words:[3] "As after the waters of the Deluge, in which the old iniquity was purged away, as after that *Baptism* (so to call it) of the old world, a dove sent out of the ark and returning with an olive-branch, was the herald to announce to the earth peace and the cessation of the wrath of Heaven, so by a similar disposition with reference to matters spiritual, the dove of the Holy Spirit, sent forth from heaven, flies to the earth, *i.e.*, to our flesh, as it comes out of the bath of regeneration after its old sins, and brings to us the peace of God; where the Church is prefigured by the ark."

When, therefore, we find in ancient Christian art this scene of a man or woman inclosed in an ark, and receiving the olive-branch from a dove, we cannot doubt that it was intended to express the same general doctrine, viz., that the faithful, having obtained the remission of their sins through baptism, have received from the Holy Spirit the gift of Divine peace, and are saved in the mystical ark of the Church from the destruction which awaits the world. And if the same scene be rudely

[1] De Unit. Eccles.

[2] Serm. de Diversis, lxxxix. p. 639.

[3] Lib. de Baptismo, vii. See also St. Aug. de Catech. Rudibus, xx. § 34.

scratched on a single tomb, as it often was, it denotes the sure faith and hope of the survivors that their deceased friend, having been a faithful member of the Church, had died in the peace of God, and had now entered into his rest. "Nobody doubts," says St. Augustine,[1] "that the Church was typified in the ark of Noe, though this might appear a mere conjecture of man's imagination, had not the Apostle Peter expressly declared it in his Epistle."

This subject not copied from heathen coins.

Some writers have contended that the way in which this subject is represented in the Catacombs takes its origin from certain famous coins of Apamea, belonging to the reigns of Septimius Severus, Macrinus, and Philip the Elder.[2] In these coins we see a man and his wife standing in a small chest, with a raven perched behind them, and a dove flying towards them; and however difficult it may be to account for this representation on a heathen coin struck in Phrygia in the beginning of the third century, the letters NΩ or NΩE, which appear on the front of the chest, leave us no choice as to referring it to the history of the patriarch; and, indeed, the town of Apamea assumed a special name—KIBΩTOC, or Ark—from its pretensions to be considered the place where the ark had rested.[3] There is a painting, however, of the same subject in the Catacomb of Domitilla, for which De Rossi unhesitatingly claims priority in point of time by a century, more or less; and the explanation we have given is abundantly sufficient to account for the Christian form of the painting. The same motive which led to a selection of the subject at all, suggests also the form in which it should be represented.

Sacrifice of Isaac.

The next Scriptural subject which finds a place among the decorations of the Catacombs is the sacrifice of Isaac by his father, but of this we have already spoken in the last chapter.

[1] De Unit. Eccl. c. 9.
[2] Eckhel Doctr. Numm., iii. 132–139.
[3] Lenormant. Manuel d'Histoire Ancienne de l'Orient, p. 25.

Moses striking the rock,

We have spoken also of the figure of Moses striking the rock, and shall have occasion to return to it again in a later chapter, with reference to a particular point about it that has not yet been mentioned. It should be added, however, in this place that another incident in the life of Moses is sometimes selected for representation in the Catacombs. He is

taking off his shoes.

to be seen in the act of taking off his shoes before approaching the burning bush; and this is treated by some of the Fathers as emblematical of those renunciations of the world, the flesh, and the devil, which all the faithful made in Baptism; or it has been suggested that it might typify that reverence

FIG. 25.—*Two scenes in one picture, from San Callisto: Moses taking off his shoes, and Moses striking the rock.*

which is required of all who approach the Christian mysteries; or, again, it might be intended to remind them of one of the revelations of Christ before His Incarnation, and of the deliverance He thus wrought for His chosen people, as a type and pledge of the deliverance that was in store for the Christians also.

In one instance, in a fresco in the Cemetery of St. Callixtus, we find these two scenes in the life of Moses represented close together, almost as parts of the same picture; but the figure of Moses in the two scenes is manifestly different. In the first, where he takes off his shoes, having been called, by the hand of God coming out of a cloud, to go up into Mount

Sinai to receive the law, he is young and without a beard; in the second, where he strikes the rock, and the thirsty Jew is drinking, he is older and bearded; and both the general look of his hair and beard, and the outline of his features, seem to present a certain marked resemblance to the traditional figure of St. Peter.

From Moses we may make a longer step forwards to the prophets, for it is doubtful whether any of the intervening links in Jewish history ever found a place on the walls of subterranean Rome before the days of Constantine. But the histories of Jonas and Daniel are among the most common of all paintings in the Catacombs. They are mentioned, together with Noe and the Good Shepherd, as the figures which Constantine caused to be set up in the public square of his new capital. The reason of the selection it is not difficult to divine.

Jonas and the fish. Plate XIX.

The history of Jonas had been put forward so emphatically by our Lord,[1] as a type both of His own and of the general resurrection, that it was repeated in every kind of monument connected with the ancient Christian cemeteries; in the frescoes on the walls, on the bas-reliefs of the sarcophagi, on lamps and medals and glasses, and even on ordinary gravestones. Christian artists, however, by no means confined themselves to that one scene in the life of the prophet, of which we have a divine interpretation, viz., his three days' burial in the belly of the fish, and his deliverance from it, as it were, from the jaws of the grave. The other incident of his life was painted almost, or quite, as commonly, viz., his lying "under the shadow of the booth covered with ivy on the east side of the city," for refreshment and rest; or again, his misery and discontent as he lay in the same place, when the sun was beating on his head and the ivy had withered away. No Patristic testimony is at hand, showing the particular intent with which this second part of the history of Jonas was so frequently set before the

Jonas under the ivy.

[1] St. Matt. xii. 39.

eyes of the faithful: it is easy, however, to see how salutary a lesson of patience and encouragement it could be made to preach to the poor persecuted Christians, whose lot, as witnesses to God's truth, was cast in a city both more populous and more wicked than that to which the prophet had been sent.

The four scenes we have described sometimes occupy the four highest spaces on the wall of a *cubiculum;* sometimes only two are given, opposite to one another; and occasionally even the whole history is crowded together into one compendious scene, the prophet being cast out by the great fish so as to fall immediately under the booth covered with the ivy.

or the gourd.

We speak of the *ivy*, because it is so called in the Vulgate; but all scholars are familiar with the dispute in the days of St. Jerome as to the right translation of the Hebrew word used in this place; and know also that all the paintings in the Catacombs correspond with the older translation, and represent a gourd.

Chronological importance of this representation.

It is of some interest to note this circumstance, as it accidentally throws important light on the question of the chronology of these paintings. Mr. Parker has said that "the history of Jonah was the fashion chiefly in the fifth century." Yet we have a Roman writer of the earlier half of that century appealing to the representations of the history of Jonas which already existed in the burying-places of the ancients (*in veterum sepulchris*); and these certainly cannot have been the work of yesterday when they were thus appealed to. It is Ruffinus who upbraids St. Jerome for the novelty he has introduced into his translation of the prophet, calling the plant which had grown up in the night for his protection, ivy, or some other plant, instead of the gourd, as it had been rendered in more ancient translations; and he satirically remarks that "now that the world is growing old and everything is hastening onwards to the end," this notable discovery ought to be published even in the old cemeteries, in order that the dead, too, might be dis-

abused of the erroneous opinion under which they had been allowed to live and die, that the prophet had been sheltered by a gourd. This clever bit of irony is easily appreciated by those who are familiar with the continual reproductions of Jonas and the gourd throughout the Catacombs, and who know that these paintings had been executed in the second and third centuries. But the whole passage is without meaning, if the paintings of the prophet's history had been only of recent date.

Indeed, had the paintings been executed in the fifth and sixth centuries, we should never have seen the gourd in them at all, for artists would scarcely have ventured to resist the authority of St. Jerome's translation of the Scriptures. We are confirmed in this view of the case by observing that in the Christian monuments of Gaul, which are all of later date than the original decorations of the Roman Catacombs, this scene is always represented in conformity with St. Jerome's version, whilst contrariwise in the East, where that version was not received, the old traditional gourd still held its ground even as late as the ninth century, as we learn from the miniatures which ornament a Greek Menologium of that date.

The form of the fish probably taken from the paintings of Andromeda,

Perhaps we might insist also on the form of the fish as teaching the same lesson of chronology. It is altogether unlike any real inhabitant of the deep. The form, however, was not suggested as that of Noe's ark was, by the place which it held in the cycle of Christian doctrine and the truth it was intended to symbolise, but rather by a Pagan model with which the Romans of that day were very familiar. The mythological tale of Andromeda, and the sea-monster to which she was exposed on the coast near Joppa (for so the story ran), was a favourite subject for the decoration of the walls in Roman villas, temples, and other public buildings. It may be seen in Pompeii, and, much nearer to the Catacombs, in Rome itself—*e.g.*, in the barracks of one of the cohorts of the *vigiles* or imperial police, discovered a few

years ago in Trastevere,[1] and in both places the monster is the precise counterpart of that which is always represented as swallowing or casting up Jonas—a kind of dragon, with large head and ears, sometimes even with horns, a long slender neck, and a very tortuous body. Of course, in the infancy of Christian art, it was convenient to have a model at hand to represent an unknown monster; and, as we have said, we do not doubt that this is the true history of its origin;[2] still this was not the only reason which recommended the adoption of so grotesque a form. It offered the further advantage of creating as strong a contrast as possible between this "great fish," which was a type of death, and the other great Fish, which, as we have seen, was the recognised symbol of the Author of life.

and acceptable for other reasons.

Daniel in the lions' den, and the Three Children in the fiery furnace

Daniel in the lions' den is usually represented in the Catacombs as standing naked[3] between two lions, with his arms outstretched in prayer, in the form of a cross. His history admits of a certain elasticity of interpretation. It might have been intended either as a figure of the Resurrection[4] or as a source of encouragement to the Christian flock under the extraordinary sufferings and dangers to which they were exposed at the command of idolatrous rulers. St. Cyprian, writing in the midst of persecutions,[5] makes this latter use of the history, and also of the history of the Three Children (as we are wont to call them), who were cast into the fiery

[1] It is represented on the interior of the archway of these barracks, given in our first volume, Fig. 11, p. 137.

[2] See Tylor's Primitive Culture, vol. i. p. 306.

[3] Le Blant (Inscriptions Chrétiennes de la Gaule, tom. i. 493) is only able to quote five examples of early Christian art in which Daniel is clothed, and all of these are of much later date than the paintings of the Catacombs. On the use of the nude in ancient Christian paintings, see St. Laurent's Guide de l'Art Chrétien., i. 213. He points out that it was impossible to attach so much importance to it then as we should now, in consequence of the social habits of the time.

[4] St. Hieron. in Zach., lib. ii. c. ix. 864.

[5] Ep. lxi. or lviii., ed Baluz.

furnace for refusing to worship the golden image set up by Nabuchodonosor. He quotes them as signal instances of the greatness of God's mercies and the power of His protection; these men having acquired the merit of martyrdom through the boldness of their confession, yet being delivered by His might out of the hands of their enemies, and preserved for His greater glory. They had done precisely what the early Christians were called upon to do; they rendered homage to the one true God in the midst of unbelievers, and they were persecuted because they persisted in fulfilling the duty of Divine worship, and refusing to participate in the idolatry by which they were surrounded. And in doing this, they showed forth their faith in God, and a confident expectation of a future resurrection; they stood full of hope and courage, lifting up their hearts and hands towards God, who delivered them out of their trials unhurt. By some of the Fathers, therefore,[1] their histories find a place among the numerous symbols of the resurrection from the dead, "whence also they were received as in a figure"[2]—*e.g.*, both in the Apostolic Constitutions[3] and in the hymns of St. Ephrem[4] we find the stories of Daniel and of the Three Children united in this connection with that of Jonas. "The body," it is said, "has triumphed over the lions' den, over the fiery furnace, and over the monstrous fish, which was obliged to surrender him whom it had swallowed." types of the Resurrection,

Of course, both of these interpretations are legitimate; indeed it is hard to say which was most likely to be continually present to the minds of the original frequenters of the Catacombs. The fact that both of them are to be found in writings of that period, is of itself a sufficient proof that in adopting either we are not arbitrarily imposing a sense of our own upon these paintings, but only seeking to discover by sure rules of interpretation what meaning was really present to

[1] St. Irenæus, lib. v. c. 5, 2: Tertull. de Resurrect.
[2] Heb. xi. 19. [3] V. 10. [4] Hymn 43.

the minds of their authors, and what lessons they conveyed to the minds of those who saw them.

or prophetical of the history of the Church.

In the writings of later Fathers, such as St. Augustine, St. Chrysostom, and others, the history of the Three Children is used as a type of the history of the Church; at first forbidden by the rulers of this world to worship the true God, and suffering all kinds of persecution because she will not heed the prohibition; then, triumphing over her enemies, and persuading even her very persecutors to become her children and protectors. And there are distinct traces of this interpretation also in the monuments of ancient Christian art. In a few of the later frescoes in the Catacombs, and more frequently in the sculptured sarcophagi of Rome, Nismes, Milan, and other places, the history of the Three Children refusing to adore the image of King Nabuchodonosor is brought into immediate juxtaposition with the history of the three wise men who came from the East to adore the new-born King of the Jews in Bethlehem.

Bullettino, 1866, 64.

Adoration of the Magi.

It may possibly be urged by interpreters of the extreme literal school, that this parallelism between the two scenes was suggested by the identity of numbers and similarity of costume; and we do not doubt that this circumstance may have helped to encourage the artists in balancing the one against the other. It is evident, however, that the secret of their connection was something far deeper than this; for in more than one instance we find the two histories actually intertwined, so to speak, and mixed up together. In one painting, the star is placed over the heads of the Three Children, as though they too had been illumined by a special revelation, to keep themselves pure from the Paganism of Roman Babylon, and to adore Christ; and in another, the monogram stands over the heads of the Magi instead of the star. This is a very significant fact, as it demonstrates that not only were the stories of the Old and New Testaments looked upon as symbols and figures of evangelical doctrines, but they were

also treated as prophetic of the facts of ecclesiastical history. The adoration which the infant Saviour received from the Magi was looked upon as a kind of prophecy, or foretaste and first-fruits, of the homage which the whole world should one day give Him; and therefore the sign which had brought conviction to Constantine was represented by anticipation, as though it had been the sign also of the Magi.

This is not the only instance in which two Bible histories are studiously brought together in ancient Christian art. The picture of Noe and the ark is frequently placed very near to the history of Jonas; and, in one instance,[1] the dove which belongs to Noe is represented on the poop of the vessel which is carrying off the prophet, unless indeed we ought to understand the dove in this instance as no longer the dove of Noe, but as representing the Holy Spirit Himself.

Moses striking the rock, and the resurrection of Lazarus.

Another pair of subjects, which seem, in like manner, to be studiously brought together in monuments of Christian art, are Moses striking the rock, and the resurrection of Lazarus. Sometimes they are found in the same compartment of a painting; sometimes roughly sketched side by side on a gravestone; still more frequently they are together on a sarcophagus. Some antiquarians consider the point of connection between them to be the display of Divine power in bringing living water out of a dry rock, and a dead man to life out of his rocky grave; but this analogy hardly seems to be sufficiently close: any other of the miracles of our Blessed Lord might from this point of view have been selected with almost equal propriety. Others, therefore, look upon these two subjects as intended to represent the beginning and the end of the Christian course; "the fountain of water springing up unto life everlasting," God's grace and the gift of faith being typified by the water flowing from the rock, "which was Christ," and life everlasting by the victory over death and the second life vouchsafed to Lazarus. And this interpretation

[1] Bottari. tav. cxxxi.

seems both more probable in itself, and is more confirmed by ancient authority.

The pictures of the resurrection of Lazarus need no explanation. The historical circumstances of the narrative give it a special prominence in the Gospels; and although the other two miracles of raising from the dead which are recorded offer at least an equally inviting field to the artist, it is remarkable that this alone is ever represented. It is an additional proof that the artists employed in the Catacombs made their appeal to the mind and spirit rather than to the eye, and that they felt they could reckon with confidence upon the enlightenment of the understanding to supply any poverty and insufficiency in the form. Lazarus is generally represented standing swathed in burial clothes, or only partially delivered from them, at the door of his temple-like tomb, and our Blessed Lord touched him with the rod of His power, which calls him back from the dead and gives him a new life. Or He seems to point him out to others after the miracle has been performed, and in this case the rod is transferred to His left hand.

Thus this idea of a new life continues to pursue us as the main source of inspiration to Christian artists. It would have been natural that it should be so after the first preaching of the Gospel, whatever the external circumstances of the Church might have been; but when she was being persecuted, and driven to take refuge in dens and caves of the earth, and when the chief, if not the only, scene of the artist's labours lay amid the tombs of the dead, it could hardly have been otherwise.

BOOK III.

THE PAINTINGS CHRONOLOGICALLY ARRANGED.

CHAPTER I.

THE PAINTINGS OF THE FIRST TWO CENTURIES.

Chronology of the frescoes, how determined—Some of Apostolic or quasi-Apostolic antiquity, e.g., (1) *in the Cemetery of Domitilla—The vine, fisherman, Daniel, Noe, banquet of fish and bread;* (2) *in Crypts of Lucina—Baptism of our Lord, Jonas, fish and bread, the Orante;* (3) *in Cemetery of Priscilla—Our Blessed Lady, the Holy Family, the Annunciation;* (4) *in Prætextatus'—The Samaritan woman, the Hæmorrhoissa, the crowning with thorns—Paintings of second century, in Crypt of St. Januarius—The Seasons, Jonas, Moses striking the rock, the Good Shepherd.*

Chronology of the galleries and chambers in Catacombs fixed by De Rossi

OUR readers are now sufficiently acquainted with the general character of ancient Christian art and the subjects which it principally adopted, to be able to appreciate the attempt we are here about to make to arrange them in chronological order. We have often had occasion to remark that De Rossi's labours in the Catacombs have been specially directed towards a settlement of their chronology, and that the chief means of effecting this has been a diligent examination of the places themselves, and a faithful record of the exact site of everything that has been found. Thus, he notes a *graffito* on the wall of a certain chamber, naming

the *Natale*, or feast-day, of Calocerus and Parthenius, who were martyred A.D. 304. He finds a tombstone, not yet removed from its original place, bearing the date of 300; four medals, of the years 305 or 306, in one tomb; and a long inscription announcing that a particular chamber was made with the sanction of Pope Marcellinus, who filled the chair of Peter A.D. 296–303. All these chronological tokens, falling within a very limited space of the subterranean excavation, enable him to conclude with certainty that this portion of the cemetery was made in the beginning of the fourth century.

Of course, it is not in every part of the Catacombs that so many and such decisive criteria of their chronology have come to light. They have been more frequent, however, than most persons are aware of; but it would be impossible to collect them in these pages. It is here especially that we must repeat what was said in the beginning of this work, that "to those who wish honestly to examine the evidence for each discovery, nothing will supply the place of a perusal of the original exposition"[1] by De Rossi himself. That we may inspire confidence, however, into the minds of our readers, with reference to the chronological arrangement of paintings which is to be set forth in this Book, we may be allowed to record an incident that is within our own knowledge.

with great precision.

We have known De Rossi peremptorily contradict the report of a discovery brought to him by one who professed to have been an eye-witness of it, solely on the grounds that such a discovery was inconsistent with what he had already ascertained to be the date of that particular part of the Catacombs. The professed chronology and topography of the alleged discovery did not agree: either the inscription, therefore, was incorrectly copied, or its position in the galleries of the cemetery incorrectly described; and a personal investigation on the spot, the following morning, completely established the justice of his objections.[2]

[1] Vol. i. p. 50.

[2] See Note D. in Appendix.

Example.

It will assist the general reader to understand the importance of this accurate topographical knowledge, and this habit of minute observation of local peculiarities, if we take a particular example. We will select a painting which has been already set before our readers in Plate XIV. We wish to learn something about its date. To gain this information, an art critic would consider that the most important point would be to discover how far the treatment of the figures and the ornamentation corresponds with that of other paintings, the dates of which are known. Without ignoring the value of such a comparison, we follow De Rossi in adopting a different method.

In the first place, we observe that a red border runs round the *arcosolium* and also the large grave near the ceiling, showing that these sepulchres were constructed before the painting was executed. Now we have seen that the *arcosolium* is not found earlier than the middle of the third century,[1] hence this painting could not have been made before that period.

Again, the small graves which mutilate the figures of Dionysias and Zoe must have been excavated a considerable time after the painting; and De Rossi has established that no burials took place in the Catacombs after the year A.D. 410.

Here, then, without any reference to the style of the painting, are determined certain limits within which its execution must have taken place, viz., between A.D. 257 and A.D. 410. When we come to examine the particular cemetery and chamber in which this fresco is found, we shall discover other indications which will narrow still further these limits; but thus much may suffice to illustrate the sure grounds upon which De Rossi bases his whole chronological system with reference to the various paintings in the Catacombs.

Antiquity of Christian art.

The result of this safe and cautious method has been to prove Christian art to have a far higher antiquity than was

[1] Vol. i. p. 408.

formerly suspected. De Rossi, having satisfied himself that certain monuments in the Cemetery of Callixtus belong to the third century, and having afterwards discovered others which are unmistakably better and older, exclaims that "to rise from certain monuments of the third century to equally certain monuments of the second is a great step towards arriving through darker and more distant ages at the very beginning in the days of the Apostles. One step more, and we shall find ourselves face to face with the hearers of the Apostles themselves; and such monuments," he adds, "undoubtedly exist. Some have still to be sought for; but others are already known, and may be visited on the Via Appia, on its neighbour the Via Ardeatina, and on the Via Salaria."

Bullettino, 1863, 22.

Some paintings of Apostolic or quasi-Apostolic times.

Let us then proceed to visit these cemeteries which he has named, and inquire what paintings are to be seen there. Afterwards, under the same guidance, we will visit other cemeteries, in proper chronological order; and at the end of our circuit we shall find ourselves in possession of a perfect catena of specimens of Christian art during the first four or five centuries; a catena which cannot be broken, because every link is cunningly wrought of many and various strands; each date is determined by the concordant testimony of many different arguments, drawn from art, history, epigraphy, and the comparative analysis of other monuments.

Bullettino, 1865, 36.

1. In Cemetery of Domitilla.

We will make our first visit to the gallery at the entrance of the Cemetery of Domitilla, on the Via Ardeatina. Our readers will not have forgotten the solid reasons which assign this part of the cemetery to the noble family of the Flavii and to the first ages of Christianity.[1] It has also been mentioned that the vault is covered with branches of the vine, with birds picking at the grapes and winged boys gathering them; the branches meandering gracefully and with the perfect freedom of nature over the whole roof, not hampered by any of those geometrical lines and divisions which give such

The Vine

[1] Vol. i. pp. 120–125.

a character of hardness to the artistic productions of the third and fourth centuries.

The whole of this composition is not unworthy to be compared with the most elegant decorations of tombs of the

FIG. 26.—*Painting on roof of most ancient part of Cemetery of Domitilla.*

Augustan age; and it is only by virtue of its position, and of the Scriptural subjects which are painted on the adjacent walls, that we claim the credit of it for Christian art. Hardly any critics will be found to dispute its antiquity. Its Christian character, however, is not so universally admitted. But we

symbolical.

must call to mind how distinguished a place among the figures and parables of Holy Writ is held by the vine, and how continually, both in the Old and New Testaments, it represented the people of God. They were "the vine brought out of Egypt and planted by God," the vine treated with such loving care, yet still unfruitful; "that vine which is Israel, and of which Juda is the pleasant fruit;" and in the Gospel it specially represents the Church united to its Divine Head.[1] When, therefore, we note how all the branches of this vine manifestly belong to one stem, springing from the same root, and especially when we see the histories of Noe and Daniel represented close at hand, we cannot doubt its symbolical, *i.e.*, its religious meaning. We do not deem it necessary, however, to insist on finding a Christian meaning in every detail of the work, *e.g.*, in the little winged *putti* which appear among the branches: these were most probably introduced only as innocent artistic ornaments.

The unusual excellence of this painting has contributed greatly to its destruction. It tempted certain persons in the last century to try to detach portions of it from the wall—a process which, whilst inflicting irreparable injury upon those who should come after, can never have yielded anything but a handful of broken plaster and *tufa* to the plunderers themselves. It is still possible to recognise amid the half-ruined decorations traces of small landscapes, such as are to be seen on the walls of some of the houses in Pompeii, but are never found in the Catacombs except in a few most ancient chambers, which were made and decorated at a time when Christian art had hardly created its own compositions.

Fisherman and Shepherd.

On other parts of the wall may be seen remains of a man fishing, and of a sheep feeding near a tree. This last probably formed a part of the group with which we are so familiar in later compositions, of the Good Shepherd, and which was a

[1] Ps. lxxix. 9–16. Esaias v. 1–7. Jerem. ii. 21. Matt. xxi. 33. Mark xii. 1. Luke xx. 9. John xv. 1–7.

favourite allegorical representation of the faithful at all times. The first, too, was not unfrequently used, and in this simple form seems manifestly derived from the language of Christ when He called Simon and Andrew to the apostolate, saying, "Come ye after Me, and I will make you to be fishers of men." Some writers contend that these subjects ought not to be considered religious subjects at all, and that they might

FIG. 27.—*Fragment of Daniel in the Lions' Den, from most ancient part of Cemetery of Domitilla.*

as well be employed in the decoration of a Pagan tomb as of a Christian. In themselves they are of course indifferent, and represent civil rather than religious acts; but the question is, what was the design of the artist, with what intention they were here represented; in a literal or in a symbolical sense. And when we observe that Noe in his ark and Daniel in the lions' den form parts of the same series, we are forced to

acknowledge that these also, the shepherd and the fisherman, are to be understood as they appear in the language of the Scriptures rather than as they are seen in real life.

Daniel in lions' den.

Mommsen says of all the human figures painted in this *cubiculum*, that they are executed in a less perfect way than the vine; but that "they are clearly of the same date as the original excavation." The figure of Noe is too much damaged to allow us to pass any judgment on it; but the figure of Daniel, imperfect as it is, displays a much higher state of art both in conception and execution than any other specimen of the same subject that has yet been discovered in the Catacombs. And it should be remembered that in these compositions there was no earlier model which the artist might take for his guide, whereas the vine might be copied either from nature or from the traditions and examples of more ancient art.

There still remains one more subject in this interesting series of paintings, which requires to be explained at greater length, as its meaning is not at first sight obvious, and there has been no occasion to speak of it before.

FIG 28.—*Two Guests at a Feast, from most ancient part of Cemetery of Domitilla.*

Bullettino, 1865, 44.

Two persons (they seem both to be men) are sitting on a couch with a three legged table before them, on which is

served a fish, surrounded by three loaves; and standing opposite to them is another man, who is probably the waiter at the feast, and may be serving the wine; but of this it is impossible to speak with certainty, in consequence of the mutilated condition of the fresco. At first sight the composition of this scene bears a strong resemblance to certain representations on Pagan monuments, which archæologists are wont to call funeral feasts. Yet there are also a few points of difference which it is well to observe.

Two guests before a table with fish and bread.

The earliest specimens of these feasts are to be seen on the upright sepulchral blocks or gravestones of Greece (στήλαι, *cippi*);[1] but on these, fish is rarely or never found on a tripod; neither is fish found with bread on any Pagan sculptures at all, earlier than the sarcophagi of the Imperial period; and even then only on roughly-executed sarcophagi of the third century, with the composition of which the influence of Christian art may perhaps have had something to do.

Similar scenes on Pagan monuments.

But whereas the combination of fish and bread appears rarely, and only at a late period, in the representations of feasts on Pagan monuments, we have learnt that it has a solemn and mysterious significance on the monuments of the early Christians. We have seen it twice in the cemetery of Callixtus, and on a tripod, as it is here; and in each instance there have been certain accessories to the picture, of such a character as to satisfy us that the tripod is meant for the table of the Holy Eucharist, called by St. Paul "the table of the Lord."[2]

Now, as the painting which we are now examining has manifestly certain *rapports* with those in St. Callixtus, and was executed by men professing the same faith, and designed to ornament chambers intended for the same use, it ought not to be interpreted in a sense altogether independent of that which shines forth so conspicuously in the monuments of

[1] See Letronne's Article in the *Revue Archæologique*, tom. v. p. 355.

[2] 1 Cor. x. 21. See pages 86, 93, 98.

that cemetery. On the other hand, we may not, without further evidence, assume their absolute identity. As this was one of the most ancient paintings, perhaps it was also the most rude and simple form of expressing an idea which was retained indeed through all subsequent ages, but gradually gathered round it fresh illustrations and received further development, until at length it found a fuller and more adequate expression in the rich and varied representations which meet us in the paintings of a later century.

Three classes of scenes with bread and fish together in the Catacombs. *Bullettino*, 1865, 45.

This is the view taken by De Rossi, and we will leave him to expound it in his own words. He says that he distinguishes "on Christian monuments three chief classes of tables or feasts, in which the fish is found together with bread. The first are those feasts which are usually considered to be representations of the *agapæ*, but which I am more disposed to think were meant to stand for the eternal banquet of the blessed in heaven. In these both men and women sit together, and in varying numbers; and this particular selection and combination of only two kinds of food is not uniformly observed. The second are suppers, whereat only seven men are seated, and where the fish and bread are always found together, and generally several basketsful of bread are added.[1] The third is the tripod bearing these things on it, either alone amid baskets of bread, or placed between a priest and an *orante*.[2]

Scenes of the second and third classes evidently referred to the Holy Eucharist.

"In these last instances, the Eucharistic signification of the scene is at its highest and most perfect degree of development; the secret and mysterious sense of the painting cannot be called in question. In pictures of the second class, the mysterious signification is united with two Gospel facts, the miraculous multiplication of the loaves and fishes, and the feast of the seven disciples on bread and fish on the banks of the Sea of Tiberias, recorded in the last chapter of St. John's Gospel; but in paintings of the first class, the bread

[1] See Plate XVII. [2] See Plate XVI. 3.

and fish are only an accessory, not the principal purpose of the scene, nor yet in any way essential to its symbolical meaning."

Of paintings of the second and third classes we have spoken sufficiently in our chapter on the Liturgical Paintings. We only wish that we could have set before our readers more copious illustrations of them, that so they might be better able to judge of the manifest identity of the subject, combined with a certain variety in the mode of treating it. In four out of the six chambers it is possible to distinguish the details with sufficient exactness to describe them, and faithful copies of them may be seen in De Rossi's second volume.[1] In all these there are only seven persons partaking of the meal, and they are always men. Once the figures are nude, as of men who had just come off from their work as fishermen, which was really the case with the men who took part in the meal provided by our Lord after the miraculous draught of fishes. There are always two or three dishes on the table, but they contain nothing but fish. In front of the table there are standing on the ground seven, eight, or twelve baskets of bread.

Dr. Graves, Protestant Bishop of Limerick, says of these pictures,[2] "that they are generally supposed either to refer to the miracles wrought by our Lord in feeding the multitudes, or to the incidents recorded by St. John in Chapter xxi. 1-14; and having this primary scope, they may be also regarded as having a reference to the Holy Eucharist." But it seems to us that it would be more correct to say that their reference to the Holy Eucharist is primary, and their representation, either of the miracles or of the supper, only subordinate and indirect. For whereas they give an imperfect and incorrect representation of these facts considered as histories, their symbolical meaning is always adequately expressed.

[1] Plates XIV., XV., XVI.

[2] Second Appendix to Mr. Parker's volume on the Catacombs, p. 198.

It remains to speak here of the first class of paintings, the so-called *agapæ*, which De Rossi believes rather to have been the heavenly banquet of the blest, "the marriage supper of the Lamb."

The first class not representations of the *agapæ*,

It is difficult to believe that it was intended by these paintings to represent the *agapæ;* for why should the early Christians have cared to give pictorial representations of what they were perfectly familiar with in daily life? Everything else which is found in the Catacombs, either in the paintings, the sculptures, or the sepulchral inscriptions, brought to the minds of those who saw them religious thoughts and feelings. Symbols of the Sacraments, suggestions of the resurrection of the body, and of a future life of never-ending happiness—in other words, the means and the end of a Christian life—were the ordinary subjects which the Christians delighted to paint. There was certainly nothing in the *agapæ* worthy to be compared in this respect with the scenes which have been described in the foregoing chapters. They were feasts of charity, of Apostolic origin; or perhaps we ought rather to say, celebrated in Apostolic times, but probably a continuation of what had been practised in the Jewish Church. They were manifestly very liable to abuse; and we know with certainty that there had been abuse in their celebration even in the days of St. Paul; and at a later period, still graver abuses led to their suppression altogether. We repeat, then, that they do not seem likely to have been an attractive subject to the Christian artist.

but symbolical of the joys of Paradise.

On the other hand, our Blessed Lord had been pleased more than once to speak of the joys of Paradise under the figure of a feast. Not only had He used this language in parables, but also in more plain discourse. He had promised that those whom He should find watching when He came, He would make "sit down to meat, and passing, He would minister unto them;" and again, just after the institution of the Holy Eucharist, He promised His Apostles, that they

should "eat and drink at His table in His kingdom."[1] It was quite natural, therefore, and in entire harmony with the whole genius of Christian art as exhibited in the Catacombs, that a similar figure should be used in painting. And it is in this sense that De Rossi, and most other archæologists of the present day, understand the following scenes from the Cemetery of SS. Peter and Marcellinus.

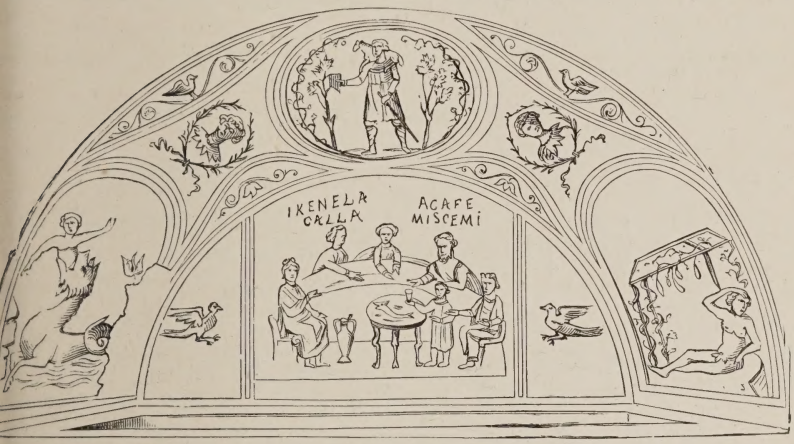


FIG. 29.—*A Feast, represented in Cemetery of SS. Peter and Marcellinus.—Aringhi*, ii. 49.

It is characteristic of Mr. Parker that he should prefer to see in them only "the commemorative feasts which were usual among the ancient Romans on the anniversary of the death of the heads of the family." And he has also imagined that the names of Pomponius Letus, Volscus, Ruffus, Fabianus, Pomponius, and Fabius, Roman Academicians of the sixteenth century,[2] were parts of the original design, and intended to

[1] St. Luke xii. 37; xxii. 30.

[2] Ruffus appears in Mr. Parker's text (p. 195) as Rufeus; and in his description of Plate XVII. as Puppeus. The reading in our text is the correct one. It is attested by a repetition of it in another place, recording two of his visits to the same subterranean chamber—*Ruffus bis fuit* (De Rossi, R.S., i. 3). Mr. Parker, imagining that Volscus Puppeus and Pomponius Fabius were the names of two old Romans, observes that "these names, under any circumstances, are remarkable."

identify the guests who are seated at the table. The names of Agape and Irene are, of course, allegorical, and intended to signify that peace and charity, which are of the essence of heavenly joys. And the rest of the scene, like the accessories to some representations of the Good Shepherd, is merely taken from the facts of ordinary life. The mixture of water (either hot or cold[1]) with the wine is a feature of Roman entertainments, familiar to all classical scholars; and the

FIG. 30.—*A Feast represented in Cemetery of SS. Peter and Marcellinus.—Bosio.*

form of the words in which the guests are made to ask for this water is the same as we find on Pagan paintings or inscriptions concerning the same subject. Figure 29 is repeated twice in different parts of the same chamber; and there is a slight variation in the inscriptions. *Agape misce mi* in the one example appears as *misce nobis* in the other, and *Irene da*

[1] "Calidæ gelidæque minister," says Juvenal, Satire V. 63.

calda is exchanged for *Irene porge calda.*[1] The cup which appears on the left-hand side of Figure 30 is really in the hands of a waiter, but his portrait is hidden from view by a wall of later construction.

Excellence of these paintings in Cemetery of Domitilla accounted for, and their character pointed out.

The superior excellence of the paintings in the Catacomb of Domitilla is partly due to their antiquity, partly to the unusually favourable circumstances under which they were executed. For there was more ample space in this gallery than in the low and narrow chambers which were the normal form of excavations in the Catacombs of the next century. Moreover, the high rank of the deceased would have secured the best artists for the work of decorating this tomb. But what gives them their real and highest interest in our eyes is the fact which all careful readers will not have failed to notice, that they set before us in germ the whole cycles, both of Biblical or historical, and even of allegorical subjects, which were afterwards repeated and developed in every kind of monument in later centuries. They are manifestly the original prototypes of the later compositions, which are identical with them as to the choice of subjects, and bear a close resemblance to them also in mode of treatment.

Bullettino, 1865, 77

2. In crypts of Lucina.

This latter remark must not be limited to the paintings of the Cemetery of Domitilla; it belongs equally to all the others to which De Rossi attributes the same antiquity; and of these we will now proceed to speak. Besides the Catacomb on the Via Ardeatina he appealed to other monuments on the Via Appia, by which a reference was intended to those very ancient crypts now incorporated with the Cemetery of Callixtus, but originally distinct from it, and known as the crypts of Lucina. These are not chambers excavated on opposite sides of the same gallery, according to the more common and later form,

Area I. x. y.

[1] The elision of the final *m* in *calda*, and other similar words, must have been well-nigh universal in conversation before it became so common in inscriptions. Authority for the form *porgere* may be found in classical authors, *e.g.*, Virgil Æn., viii. 274. Pocula porgite dextris. Indeed, it is sufficiently common to find a place in ordinary dictionaries.

but the two chambers open one out of the other, and were manifestly intended for private burial-vaults, without any reference to their possible use as places of assembly.

In the outer chamber, most of the paintings on the ceiling, and large portions of the paintings on the walls of both chambers have so entirely perished that we cannot even identify the subjects. Birds, and parts of the figures of men and women are all that can now be distinguished in several places. But over the entrance to the inner chamber is a painting which seems to represent the Baptism of our Blessed Lord; one man

Baptism of Christ.

FIG. 31.—*A fresco representing the Baptism of our Lord in one of the cubicula in the crypt of Lucina.*

is helping another to come up out of the water, whilst a dove floats in the air above Him. On the wall opposite the entrance are those singular representations of a fish, apparently alive and swimming, bearing on its back a basket of bread and a glass of wine, which, on the authority of a letter of St. Jerome, we have identified with the Holy Eucharist. It is true that the painting is of far higher antiquity than the writing of the Doctor; but he is describing a scene which was no longer according to the normal condition of things in the Church, though probably common enough at the time when the painting was made, and revived in later times under circumstances

Holy Eucharist.

of exceptional poverty, such as those of the Bishop of whom he spoke, who had spent all his substance for the relief of the poor. We are not guilty of any anachronism, therefore, when we explain this painting of the first or second century by the words of a writer of the fifth.

Jonas.

On the opposite wall are one or two other figures of fish, or at least of monsters belonging to the deep, suggestive of the history of Jonas, who seems also to be lying unsheltered on the ground in an upper compartment, but without any vestige either of the sea-monster near him, or of the gourd hanging over his head. Thus, this earliest representation of Jonas stands in precisely the same relation to the later developments of this prophet's history, as the two men partaking of bread and fish in the fresco of Domitilla to subsequent symbols of the Holy Eucharist. On either side of the chamber are the two sheep with the milk-pail raised aloft between them, and the two birds, with a tree between them, in a garden, which have been already explained [1] as emblematical of two souls fed by the Holy Eucharist in this world, and now in enjoyment of everlasting bliss in the next.

Orante alternated with Good Shepherd.

The ceiling of this chamber is that of which we have given a representation in Plate XII., of which we have said that the first general impression leaves us doubtful whether it has any Christian emblems at all. On closer inspection, however, we see that Daniel and the lions once filled the central compartment, and that the Good Shepherd and an *orante* are made to correspond to one another in the four corners. We need not here speak of any of these figures except the last. Its position in the ornamentation of this roof and the pedestal on which it stands, cause it at first sight to bear a strong resemblance to some of the female figures so frequently used in Pagan decorations. But the resemblance is only superficial, whilst the points of difference which separate them are fundamental. The dancing women of Pagan art are graceful and attractive to

[1] See page 553, 54.

the senses, and inspire passion; the female figures on the walls of the Catacombs speak only to the soul; they are engaged in prayer, and they invite to prayer.

They stand in what was the ordinary attitude of Christian prayer in those days, stretching out both their hands in a way which represents, as the Fathers did not fail to remark, the form of a cross;[1] sometimes, but very rarely, they stretch forth one hand only, in which case they bear a resemblance to the Pietas of the Pagans. Figures of these *oranti* (generally of women) are very abundant throughout the Catacombs. When rudely scratched on gravestones, or carved on the front of sarcophagi, or painted on the vaults of *arcosolia*, they are probably intended to represent the person who is buried in the adjacent tomb; indeed, the names of the deceased are sometimes added,[2] and where this is the case, they only express pictorially the same consoling truth as is elsewhere set forth more plainly in words—viz., that the deceased are thought of as still living in God, and praying for those whom they have left behind. Elsewhere, however, there seem grave objections to this simple and obvious interpretation; indeed, in some instances, *e.g.*, in the present, it seems to be quite inadmissible; and again, where the *orante* occupies a part of a ceiling in which every other compartment is filled by some person or story from the Bible, it is hard to believe that under these circumstances any memorial of a private individual would have been allowed to be introduced.

Bullettino, 1866, 47.

Then, again, it has been observed by De Rossi and others that a female *orante* is often found as a companion to the Good Shepherd; and although it is possible that this too may sometimes be intended only for a single member of the flock now

Symbolical of the Church,

[1] Nos non attollimus tantum, sed etiam expandimus, et de Dominicâ Passione modulamur et orantes confitemur.—*Tertull. De Orat.* c. 14. Si statueris hominem manibus expansis, imaginem crucis feceris.—*Ad. Nat.* i. 12. Palmas in morem crucis ad Patrem levandas orantes expandunt manus.—Prudent: *Peristeph.*, vi. 103.

[2] See Plate XIV.

gathered into the fold, yet there are not wanting, in other instances, indications of a deeper and more general meaning, which Catholic archæologists find either in our Blessed Lady or in the Church. Either might, of course, be very fitly represented by such a figure, and the two interpretations by no means exclude one another. On the contrary, both may very well have been present together to the mind of the artist, for it is certain that the faithful in ancient times recognised a certain resemblance between these two, the Blessed Virgin and the Church. Sedulius, the poet, and St. Ambrose, the Bishop,[1] agree in bearing witness to this; so does the legend inscribed in Mosaic in the apse of the Lateran Basilica, by Pope Sixtus III., A.D. 432; and long before any of these, the famous letter of the Church of Lyons, reciting the triumphs of her martyrs, gives utterance to the same sentiment, when it calls the Church, quite naturally, "the Virgin-Mother,"[2] as though the phrase would be at once understood by all. But there is yet older and higher authority than this, for the Church was described by St. Paul as the Virgin Bride of Christ, whilst yet she is also the fruitful mother of children. Hence even Protestant authorities have allowed that they are so bound up together in Holy Scripture, that in some places we know not whether it is the one or the other that is spoken of.[3] This is specially true of the Apocalyptic vision of the "woman clothed with the sun, and having the moon under her feet, and bringing forth a man-child."[4] It is impossible to read this without recognising in the mind of the writer a certain "identification," or compenetration of the two ideas. "I do not deny, of course," says Dr. Newman with reference to this vision, "that under the image of the woman the Church is signified; but what I would maintain is this, that the Holy Apostle

R.S., i. 347.

Bullettino, 1864, 91.

Bullettino, 1867, 84.

R.S., i. 347.

or of the Blessed Virgin.

[1] Sedul. V. 356–359. St. Ambr. de Instit. Virg. c. xiv.

[2] Euseb. H. E., v. i. § 40.

[3] Female Characters of Holy Scripture, by Rev. Isaac Williams, p. 327.

[4] Apoc. xii. 1, 5.

would not have spoken of the Church under this particular image unless there had existed a Blessed Virgin Mary, who was exalted on high, and the object of veneration to all the faithful."[1]

Since then, "the Church is one vast body in heaven and on earth, in which every holy creature of God has his place; and, since "intercession is the first principle of the Church's life, and the vital principle of that intercession, as an availing power, is, according to the will of God, sanctity," what wonder that our Blessed Lady, at once the greatest and holiest of creatures, should have been accepted as a fitting type of the whole Church, and represented with uplifted hands as exercising her intercessory power on behalf of the Church militant? the first-fruits, or herself the personification of the whole assembly of the saints in glory, praying for those who are still contending and running the race of life on this earth.

She is certainly so represented (sometimes alone, sometimes between the Apostles Peter and Paul, or with other Saints) on several of the gilded glasses of the fourth century, of which we shall have to speak hereafter; as also on a very ancient sepulchral marble in a Church of St. Maximin in Provence. There can be no dispute about it in these instances, as the name itself is written; and in the monument of Provence a legend, MARIA VIRGO MINESTER DE TEMPULO GEROSALE, referring to her ministrations in the Temple, as recorded in one of the apochryphal Gospels.[2] Moreover, on Byzantine coins,[3] and in works of Greek art generally down to the present day, our Blessed Lady is similarly represented. On the other hand, the same figure remained in use for the Church down to the eleventh or twelfth century; for, as has been already men-

Bullettino, 1866, 47.

[1] Letter to Dr. Pusey on his Eirenicon, p. 62. See also for what follows, pp. 76, 78.

[2] Le Blant. Inscr. Chrst., ii. 277. Macarii Hagioglypt. 36.

[3] Walsh's Essays on Ancient Coins, p. 38.

tioned, a Liturgical MS. of that date in the Barberini Library, contains amongst its illustrations an *orante*, with the legend ECCLESIA.

Tradition, then, both ancient and long-continued, and preserved both in literature and art, allows us in a certain sense to identify the Church and our Blessed Lady; and we are not departing from antiquity, nor indulging in imagination and imposing arbitrary interpretations of our own, when we say that an *orante*, placed in manifest *rapport* with the Good Shepherd, or (as sometimes happens) even substituted for

FIG. 32.—*Gravestone from the Cemetery of San Callisto in which the Orante seems substituted for the Good Shepherd.*

Him,[1] sometimes means the Holy Church, the Mother of us all, sometimes our Blessed Lady, the Queen of Saints. Sometimes she is the new Eve, as the Shepherd is the new Adam; or she is the Virgin and the Spouse *par excellence*, the spotless Virgin and the Spouse of Christ, the Church personified; or she is some one Christian virgin in particular, or merely a Christian soul generally. And these different significations, all equally applicable, will be preferred at various times,

[1] See Epitaphs on the Catacombs, pp. 158, 159.

according to the point of view from which the *orante* is contemplated—a point of view sometimes determined by the very nature of the representation, but sometimes also left so indeterminate that the devout mind can choose either the one or the other, or even unite them all.

Elsewhere in the Catacombs we find our Blessed Lady represented in another way, natural or historical rather than symbolical. Of course this is the case in all the numerous paintings of the adoration of the Magi, where she sits with the Holy Child on her knee, receiving their offerings. But none of these, so far as we know, belong to the very earliest period of Christian art, of which alone we desire to speak in the present chapter.

3. In Cemetery of Priscilla.

The Blessed Virgin and Holy Child.

Bullettino, 1865, 23.

There is another painting, however, of the Holy Mother and the Divine Infant, with different accessories, in the Cemetery of Priscilla, of which De Rossi says that it is either coeval with the first origin of Christian art, or but little removed from it. It is either of the age of the Flavii and of the preaching of the Apostles, or of that immediately following, *i.e.*, of Trajan or Hadrian, or, at the very latest, of the first Antonines.

The tomb of which it forms an ornament is of the kind which we have called a table-tomb; *i.e.*, it is one of those square-headed tombs which were afterwards superseded by the *arcosolia*. On the roof (so to call it) of this tomb there was figured in fine stucco the Good Shepherd between two sheep, and some other subject now nearly effaced. De Rossi, however, arguing from comparison with other monuments, conjectures it to have been the figure of an *orante* between two trees.[1] The trunk, fruit, and leaves of the tree may still be traced, first moulded in stucco and afterwards painted. But the picture with which we are more particularly concerned covers one end of the vaulted roof, so that it stands horizontally, and not perpendicularly, before the spectator, and might almost be overlooked, if attention were not called to it. It

[1] Imagines Selectæ B. M. Virginis, p. 9.

consists of a woman holding an infant at her breast, and a young and almost beardless man standing opposite to them, Plate XX. 1. whilst a star appears high in the air between them. The woman wears a tunic with short sleeves, and a cloak over the tunic, and has her head partially covered by a short light veil. The man is clothed in the *pallium* only, holds a volume in one hand, and with the other points to the star.

Nobody doubts that the woman and child are the Blessed Virgin and the Infant Jesus; but there is not the same unanimity in identifying the other figure. It is very common for the star to accompany our Blessed Lady in ancient Chris-

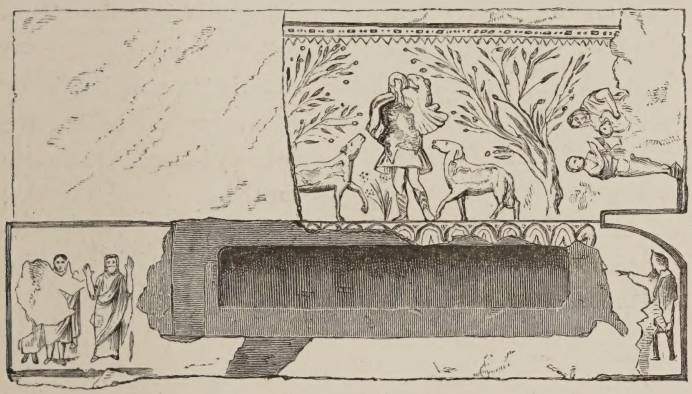


FIG. 33.—*The Arcosolium and its roof in Cemetery of Priscilla, having representations of our B. Lady and the Child Jesus, and perhaps of the Holy Family.*

tian paintings and sculptures, where there is an historical excuse for it, *e.g.*, when she is represented with the Magi offering their gifts, or kneeling by the side of the manger with the ox and the ass; but with a single figure, as in the present instance, it is not so usual. Hence the difference of opinion among archæologists as to the interpretation that ought to be given of this figure. The most obvious conjecture perhaps would be, that it was meant for St. Joseph, except that no ancient monument ever represented him with a volume in his hand. De Rossi gives other reasons also, why we should The Prophet Isaias. rather understand by this figure some teacher or prophet (to

whom, of course, the *pallium* would be specially appropriate), and he names Isaias, whose prophecies concerning the Messias abound with imagery borrowed from light.[1] Moreover, this prophet is found on one of the glasses in the Catacombs, standing in a similar attitude before our Blessed Lord, where his identity can hardly be disputed, since he appears in another part of the same glass in the act of being sawn asunder by the Jews[2] (in accordance with the tradition mentioned by St. Jerome);[3] and our Blessed Lady, as an *orante*, occupies the intervening compartment between these two figures of the prophet.

Bosio[4] has preserved to us another fresco from the Cemetery of St. Callixtus, still more closely resembling that upon which we are commenting; only there is no star, but in its stead the battlements, as of some town, appear behind the woman and child, by which it was probably intended to denote the town of Bethlehem, as we see in the sculptures, mosaics, and other works of later art; and this, too, may be taken as a confirmation of De Rossi's conjecture that it is intended here to represent the prophet.

Antiquity of this painting.

We have already said that De Rossi considers this painting to have been executed at a time when the voice of the Apostles, or at least its echo, still resounded in the Church. He thinks it certain that it was executed within the first hundred and fifty years of the Christian era. He bids us carefully study the art displayed in the design and execution of the painting, and then to compare it with the decorations of the famous Pagan tombs discovered on the Via Latina in 1858, and which are unanimously referred to the times of the Antonines, or with the paintings of the *cubicula* near the Papal crypt in San Callisto, described in a former chapter,[5] and known to belong to an early part of the third century; and he argues

[1] Isa. ix. 2; lx. 2, 3, 19; St. Luke i. 78, 79.
[2] See Garrucci, Vetri, &c., p. 280.
[3] In Isaiam, xv. c. 7. [4] Rom. Sott. p. 255. [5] Page 86, &c.

1.

2.

that the more classical style of the painting now under examination obliges us to assign it to a still earlier date. Indeed, the style of art exhibited here is of so superior a character that some critics have not hesitated to say,[1] that it might be attributed without offence even to Correggio; and another remarks of the face of the Child, that it is the only one in the whole range of the Catacombs in presence of which he would dare to pronounce the word "beautiful."[2]

De Rossi next proves that the Catacomb in which it is found was one of the oldest, Priscilla, from whom it receives its name, being the mother of Pudens, and a contemporary of the Apostles; and still further, that there is good reason for believing with Bosio and others that the tombs of SS. Pudentiana and Praxedes, and therefore, probably, of their father, St. Pudens himself, were in the immediate neighbourhood of the gallery in which this Madonna is found; finally, that the inscriptions which are found there form a class by themselves,[3] bearing manifest tokens of the same high antiquity. Everything, therefore, combines to satisfy him that this is the most ancient painting of our Blessed Lady which has yet been discovered; and the reader will have observed that, if our conjectures as to the precise locality be accepted, it would have been executed under the same exceptionally favourable circumstances as the other most ancient paintings at the sepulchre of the Flavii.

At either end of the same grave, the roof of which is ornamented by the figures we have been discussing, are other figures which seem to belong to the same class.[4] They are at present in a very damaged condition; but enough remains to show that here also at one end there was a man in the attitude of pointing at something, and this something, represented at the other end of the grave, proves to be a man and

Representations of the Holy Family

[1] Journal des Savants, 1866, p. 96. [2] Richemont, p. 350.

[3] See Epitaphs of the Catacombs, pp. 32, 33.

[4] See the figures at either end of the lower half of Fig. 33.

woman in the attitude of prayer, and a child of whose attitude it is impossible to judge. Can this have been intended for "the Holy Family"? Bosio,[1] Bottari, and others interpreted a similar scene from the Catacomb of St. Callixtus, as purely domestic, signifying that a father, mother, and child lay buried there. Garrucci, however, inclined to the opposite opinion,[2] and so does De Rossi, though he considers that this class of monuments is open to some question, nearly all the ancient frescoes in which St. Joseph is supposed to appear being in a very bad state of preservation. De Rossi also tells us—and this time he is able to quote both Bosio and Garrucci as of the same opinion with himself—that there are other frescoes in the same Cemetery of Priscilla representing the Annunciation by the Archangel,[3] the Adoration by the Magi,[4] and the Finding of our Blessed Lord in the Temple; in a word, all these archæologists are agreed that this cemetery surpasses every other, both for the number, the variety, and the antiquity of pictorial representations of our Blessed Lady.

and the Annunciation.

St. Joseph certainly appears in some of the sarcophagi; and in the most ancient of them as a young and beardless man, generally clad in a tunic. In the mosaics of St. Mary Major's which are of the fifth century, and in which he appears four or five times, he is shown of mature age, if not old; and from that time forward this became the more common mode of representing him. Probably the later artists followed the legend of St. Joseph's age and widowhood which occurs in the Apocryphal Gospels, especially that which bears the name of St. James the Less, and those on the birth of Mary, and the Infancy of the Saviour. These legends had been quoted by Ephiphanius, St. Gregory Nazianzen, and other writers of the fourth century; and allusions to them, or even

Modes of representing St. Joseph.

[1] Bosio, p. 549. Bottari, iii. 151.
[2] Macarius, Hagioglypta, pp. 174, 242.
[3] Bosio, Rom. Sott. 549. Garrucci. Storia dell' arte Cristiana, Tav : 75.
[4] Hagioglypta, p. 245.

whole scenes taken from them, occur in the artistic monuments of the fifth and succeeding centuries. Before that time, Christian artists seem strictly to have been kept within the limits of the canonical books of Holy Scripture. Afterwards it was probably considered that there was no longer any danger to the integrity of the faith, and greater licence was given both to poets and artists.

All the paintings that have hitherto been described, De Rossi and other competent judges attribute to the first century, or the first half of the second; for it is not pretended with reference to this chronological arrangement of the paintings in the Catacombs that we have arrived at mathematical accuracy. De Rossi gives the dates we have named only as the closest approximation to the truth that can be made, not as the very truth itself, which cannot now be ascertained. What he insists upon as absolutely certain is the relative chronology of the different frescoes which he examines, that such an one is unquestionably prior in point of time to such another, but he would allow a margin of a quarter of a century perhaps, more or less, to most of the dates he may assign to them. Thus, he hesitates between the end of the first century and the beginning of the second, as the date of certain landscapes and other figures which decorate a chamber at the foot of the principal staircase in the Cemetery of Domitilla, and which he compares to the decorations of the houses at Pompeii; as also of a much more remarkable series of paintings in a chamber of the Catacomb of Prætextatus. He inclines, however, towards the later date.

4. In Cemetery of Prætextatus, near the tomb of St. Quirinus.

In our volume on the History of the Catacombs, our chief specimen of the second century was the Catacomb of Prætextatus, which contained amongst others the tombs of St. Quirinus, who suffered A.D. 130, and of St. Januarius, one of the seven sons of St. Felicitas, A.D. 162.[1] The remarkable series of paintings to which we now allude decorate a chamber

[1] See vol. i. p. 132.

in the immediate neighbourhood of what is believed to be the burial-place of the more ancient martyr. Unfortunately, we are unable to set before our readers a perfectly trustworthy copy of them. They were first discovered in 1850, and Father Marchi caused copies of them to be at once taken, and exposed in the Christian Museum at the Lateran, where their importance, as among the earliest monuments of Gospel history, was immediately recognised. M. Perret also took copies of the originals, which may be seen in his great work,[1] published at the expense of the French Government; and they have appeared also in the "History of Christian Art," by Garrucci,[2] who had access to the drawings made for Father Marchi. It is to the last-named work that we are indebted for our own sketch; but we should have greatly preferred the more accurate copies that are in course of preparation for De Rossi. Unfortunately, the publication of these is delayed, because they are not quite complete, and he is no longer able to gain access to the originals. The owner of the field under which this Catacomb lies has persisted, for the last eight or ten years, in refusing admission to any representative of the Commission of Sacred Archæology; and although the courts of law have twice declared his resistance to be illegal, it has not been possible, or at least it has not been deemed prudent, to attempt to enforce their decision.

We have thought it necessary to enter into these particulars, because it has been made a matter of complaint, both against De Rossi and ourselves, that we have not published the paintings in question. Mr. Parker, with the connivance of the landlord, but without the consent of those to whom the guardianship of these subterranean treasures legally, as well as morally, belongs, was enabled to descend into the cemetery, and to introduce his artist. From some cause or other, however, he did not use the magnesian light with which he had been wont to work in the Catacombs, and therefore did not

[1] Tom. i., Plates LXXX.–LXXXII. [2] Tom. i., tav. xxxviii., xxxix.

take photographs, but made drawings only, which are most imperfect. He was struck with the good drawing of the figures, which he rightly recognised as a token of antiquity; but then, misled by his fundamental error as to the Catacombs having been used as burial-places by Christians and Pagans indifferently, and having nobody at hand to call his attention to the presence of the Good Shepherd in the centre of the roof, and to the undoubtedly Christian gravestones still remaining *in situ* in the lower part of the walls, he imagined the paintings to be Pagan, though without being able to suggest any Pagan subjects which they could represent.

FIG. 34.—*Our Lord with the Woman of Samaria at the Well.*

In our drawings of them, nobody will fail to recognise the figures of the Samaritan woman at the well, and of that other woman who touched the hem of our Lord's garment and was healed. In Mr. Parker's drawings[1] there is no appearance of the well between the figures of the man and the woman in the first scene, and only a very indistinct shadowy outline, where there should have been the Hæmorrhoissa, behind the principal figures in the second. In the third scene[2] he has omitted

The woman of Samaria at the well.

The Hæmorrhoissa.

[1] Plate XIV. of his volume on the Catacombs.

[2] Plate XIII. of Mr. Parker.

the reed, which is certainly present in the extended hands of the man who stands in the middle. With this adjunct, we

FIG. 35.—*The Hæmorrhoissa touching the hem of our Lord's garment.*

think everybody would say that we have here a pictorial repre-

The crowning with thorns.

sentation of the words of the Evangelist, "They struck His

FIG. 36.—*Striking our Lord's Head with a Reed.*

Bullettino, 1872, 64.

head with a reed;"[1] and this interpretation is unhesitatingly given by De Rossi and others who have studied the originals.

[1] St. Mark xv. 19.

Father Garrucci, however, doubts about the form of a crown round the head of the principal personage (where Mr. Parker's artist seems to have recognised it), and he objects to the presence of the dove[1] at this particular incident of the Passion. He therefore interprets the whole scene as representing the Baptism of Christ. He considers that the splashes of green paint round the head were intended merely to represent water, as in the paintings of the administration of Baptism in the sacramental chapels of St. Callixtus, and the man standing with a reed or the long leaf of some aquatic plant in his hand, he understands as intended to designate the place—the banks of the Jordan. But this is very unlike the ordinary artistic language of the Catacombs; and, little as we should have expected beforehand to meet with a scene from the Passion of so ancient a date, we accept De Rossi's interpretation as more probable in itself and more agreeable to the original.

Of the Samaritan woman conversing with our Lord at the well, De Rossi has found another representation in the Cemetery of St. Soteris, and, some authors would say, in another older area of the Cemetery of St. Callixtus.[2] St. Maximus of Turin understands her to be a type of the Gentile Church;[3] and it would almost seem from the remarks of Eusebius upon the famous statue of our Blessed Lord, which was set up by the woman who was cured of the issue of blood by touching the hem of His garment, that she too was believed in the tradition of the Church not to have been one of the children of Israel, though there is nothing in Holy Scripture to say so. Perhaps future excavations may show that the scene of the crowning with thorns was not so singular a monument as at present it appears. It is important to observe that it belongs to a period anterior to any interference (so far as we know) with the privacy and inviolable security of the Christian ceme-

R.S., iii. 8.

[1] Mr. Parker's drawing gives no sign of the dove.

[2] See page 101.

[3] Hom : 98.

teries in Rome, so that there is less difficulty in accepting the explanation that is proposed than there would have been, had the painting been of later date.

Somewhat later paintings at the tomb of St. Januarius.

If we pass on from the tomb of St. Quirinus to the chamber in which St. Januarius was buried, within the limits of the same cemetery, we find a change in the character of the ornamentation, exactly corresponding to the later date to which it

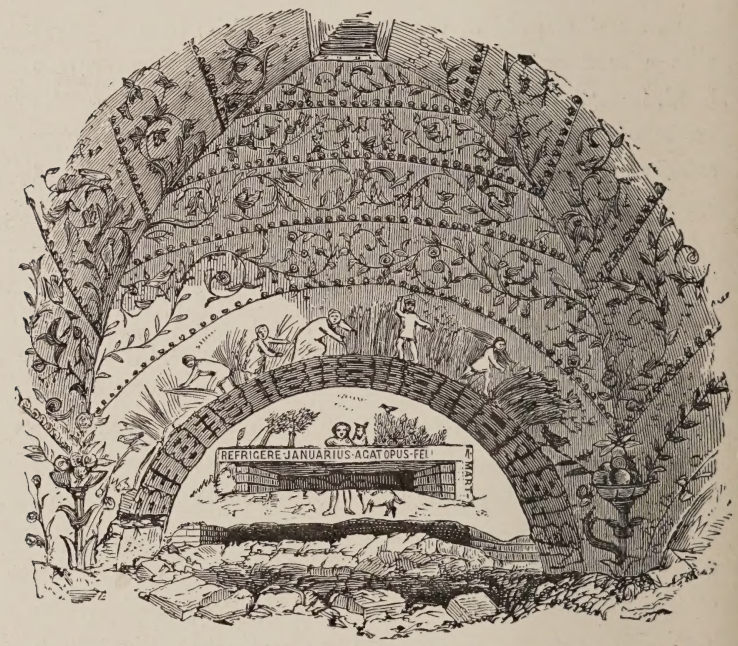


FIG. 37.—*Painting of an Arcosolium of the Second Century in Prætextatus.*

Bullettino, 1363, 3; 1872, 70.

belongs. The walls of the chamber are very richly decorated, and in a style by no means inferior to the best classical productions of the same period, yet certainly not to be compared with the decorations which we have examined in the principal gallery of the Catacomb of Domitilla. A glance at the accompanying sketch of the vaulted roof will suffice to show the difference between them. Its stiff geometrical divisions form a striking contrast to the perfect grace and freedom of the

The vine.

vine trailing over the roof of the sepulchre of the Flavii. Still, it is far from being a bad composition or badly executed, and we have nothing like it in post-Constantinian times.

The whole space is divided into four bands of wreaths, one of roses, another of corn-sheaves, a third of vine-leaves and The seasons.

FIGS. 38, 39, 40.—*Lowest Border of Ornament on three sides of a Chamber in Cemetery of Prætextatus, representing three seasons.*

grapes (and in all these, birds are introduced visiting their young in nests), and the last or highest, of leaves of laurel or the bay-tree, or (according to Garrucci) of the olive-tree. Of course these represent severally the seasons of spring, summer, autumn, and winter. The last is a well-known figure or symbol

of death; and probably the laurel, as the token of victory, was intended to represent the new and Christian idea of the everlasting reward of a blessed immortality. At the four corners are large vases of bright flowers, out of which rise stems, following the ribs of the vault, and entwined with leaves and flowers to which the bands are attached. Below the lowest of the bands succeeds another representation of the seasons, according to the harvest peculiar to each. On one side are children gathering flowers; but much of this is broken off; on another, which may be seen in our sketch, grain is being reaped, gathered in, and threshed; on a third, men and boys are gathering grapes, bringing them in baskets on their shoulders to the wine-press, where a beardless youth and a man are employed in treading them out, and the must is running from two channels into a large vessel prepared to receive it. Finally, on the fourth side, young men are gathering olives, some standing on ladders to pick them from the trees, and others collecting them from off the ground. Tertullian tells us that "the whole revolving order of the seasons" (which is here represented) was considered by Christians to be "a witness of the resurrection of the dead;" and doubtless it was with this intention that they were here painted. The same lesson was, of course, taught also by the history of Jonas, fragments of which may be seen on another wall of this same chamber, with two sailors throwing him overboard. Moses also striking the rock was painted here; and, as we see, the Good Shepherd standing between two trees, with one or two sheep at His side and one on His shoulder; and this picture, executed on the first coat of plaster with which the chapel was covered, was afterwards destroyed for the sake of excavating a grave in the rock behind it.

Jonas,

Moses striking the rock, the Good Shepherd.

We have seen in this chapter two specimens of the vine used as an ornament in ancient Christian art; and it may interest our readers to see yet two other specimens of the same subject, belonging to later dates. They serve to show on the one

Later specimens of the vine.

hand the continuation of the same idea, and on the other a gradual deterioration in the method of execution. Nobody can fail to notice in the subjoined sketches (for which, and for drawing our attention to the comparison, we are indebted

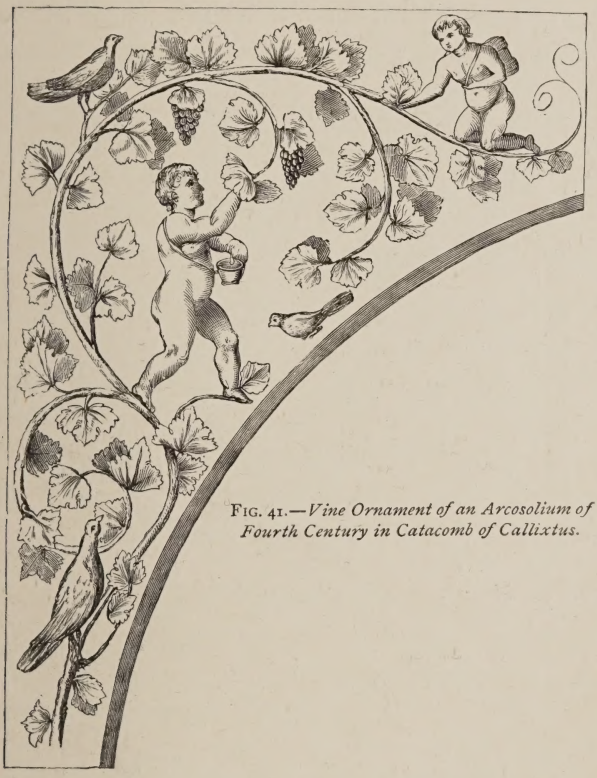


FIG. 41.—*Vine Ornament of an Arcosolium of Fourth Century in Catacomb of Callixtus.*

to Mr. St. John Tyrwhitt[1]) how widely they depart from the truth and beauty of nature, and with what arbitrary violence the branches are twisted into regular form, so as rapidly to degenerate into a mere decorative pattern. The author we have just quoted refers to the vintage-mosaics of St. Constantin

[1] Christian Art and Symbolism, pp. 66, 67, and The Art-teaching of the Primitive Church, p. 117.

in Rome, as exhibiting the same naturalism as the vine in San Callisto, but somewhat inferior grace, and he observes about the fifth century vaulting in the church of Galla Placidia, that in it "Græco-Roman art has reached the Byzantine stage of high conventionality, still retaining great beauty; and the same degree of subordination to decorative pattern may be seen in the mosaic of the vine on the front of St. Mark's at Venice."

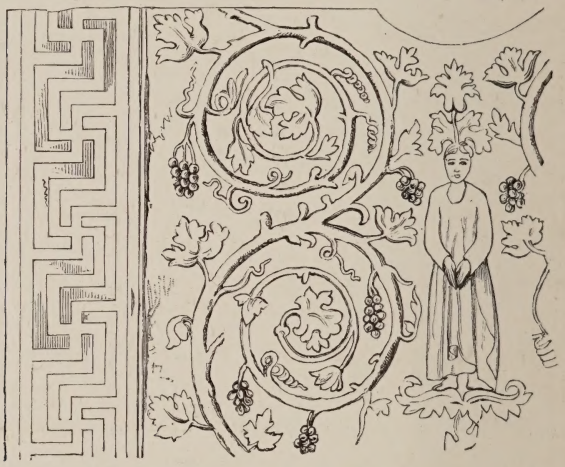


FIG. 42.—*Vine Ornament on Tomb of Galla Placidia at Ravenna*, A.D. 450.

CHAPTER II.

PAINTINGS OF THE THIRD CENTURY.

Development of Christian Art—Combination of subjects and composition—Examples: Fisherman—Jonas and the ship—The rock—The Orante, individualised and named—Examples—Family groups—Scenes from civil life—Masks and other ornaments of Pagan art—Biblical subjects still retained—Three Children in fiery furnace—Daniel in the lions' den—Susanna and the Elders—Scene from the trial of a martyr.

WE have seen that before the end of the second century Christian art not only represented the dogmas of the faith under the veils of emblems and symbols, such as the anchor, the fish, the lamb, the dove, the vine, the fisherman, and the Good Shepherd, but also boldly produced persons and scenes from Bible history, such as Noe, Moses, Daniel, and Jonas from the Old Testament, and three or four others from the New. These all, however, were treated at first with the utmost simplicity. Each subject stands alone, as it were. The principal figure is engaged in a single action; the fisherman is fishing, or the shepherd is carrying a sheep; but there are few, if any, accessories to the picture; and it is not clear that there was always an attempt at combination and composition. It was in the nature of things that, as time went on, Christian art should develop.

Development of Christian art in third century.

Such development could not fail to be the fruit of the pious meditation of successive generations of Christians exercised upon the history of their faith and upon the outward representations of its mysteries, to which they had been now so long accustomed. The bud expanded, and the full-blown flower displayed new beauties—beauties which had been there indeed before, but were unseen. Different emblems or

Combination of subjects and composition.

different typical histories were blended together, and the result became more artistic: artistic in the combination of ideas, although Christianity did not remove the causes which rendered it more and more difficult to express those ideas with adequate skill in execution. A more brilliant translation, so to speak, was thus given of the same thoughts and ideas with which we have been familiar in a more elementary form from the beginning. We have seen a singularly perfect specimen of this in "the sacramental chapels,"[1] which may have been executed before the end of the second century; certainly they reflect the character of Christian art as it was in the second century, rather than as it was in the third. In these chapels we

FIG. 43.—*The Ship of Jonas, in one of the Sacramental Chambers.*

Examples from the Sacramental Chambers.

met again the Apostolic fisherman, whom we saw in the most ancient sepulchre of the Flavii; but the river in which he fishes is now a mystical river, formed by the waters which have flowed from the rock struck by Moses, that Rock which is Christ, whence flow the graces of Baptism, the one fountain of faith. The fish and the bread are there also, but not in their naked simplicity, lying on a table, or the one merely placed on the top of the other; but with additions connecting them with some of our Lord's miracles, and with incidents of the Old Law on the one hand, and with the celebration of the holy Liturgy on the other. The ship which appears alone on several of the early tombstones, and which we have seen

The ship of Jonas a type of the Church.

[1] See pp. 90–103.

laden with Christian souls, guided by the Holy Spirit, is shown in these same chambers in the midst of a tempest, and a man who is outside the ship is tossed about in the waves in imminent danger of perishing; whilst another man, who is within the ship, stands erect in the attitude of Christian prayer; and the power and goodness of God, typified by a figure coming out of a cloud, lays hold of him by the hair of his head to secure his safety. The corresponding compartment in the next chamber gives us the ship of Jonas, but with the sails and masts so arranged as to reveal to all Christian eyes the form of a cross.[1] The interpretation of these symbols is too obvious to need comment. We will only quote the words of St. Hippolytus: "We who hope in the Son of God are persecuted by unbelievers. . . . The world is a sea, in which the Church, like a ship, is beaten by the waves, but not submerged."[2] Prayer in the one instance, and the Cross in the other, set before us the grounds of this holy confidence.

Other Bible histories also are made use of, of which we have no earlier specimens, the sacrifice of Isaac, the healing of the paralytic, and the resurrection of Lazarus. And all, as we have seen, are so admirably arranged as to be equivalent to a well-ordered dogmatic discourse, or almost a pictorial catechism, set forth by official authority, describing with great accuracy the rise and progress of the new Christian life; the life of Divine grace, first imparted by baptism, then fed by the Holy Eucharist, and finally exchanged for an everlasting life of glory.

Isaac, Lazarus, &c. *R.S.*, ii. 347.

Bullettino, 1865, 4; 1873, 19.

If we pass from this area of the Cemetery of St. Callixtus, the latest portion of which is not later than the beginning of the third century, to others which were not made till the latter half, or quite towards the close, of the same century, we shall observe a marked change in the character of the decorations. Allegorical symbols were almost abandoned, and a decided preference was given, even in the most careful and elaborate

Approach to literalism before end of century.

[1] See Plate XIX. 1.

[2] De Antichristo c. lix. apud Gallandi Bibl. Pat., tom. ii. p. 438.

paintings, to more personal and historical types. Even when the old forms were retained, they generally received certain modifications, tending more or less strongly in this direction.

The *orante* individualised.

In the figure of the *orante*, for example, instead of the plain white robe, ornamented only by two narrow stripes of purple descending from the neck to the feet, the broad *clavus* is substituted, and certain round purple patches, such as were then commonly worn by way of ornament, and called *calliculæ*, are added to the skirts of the vestment; earrings also, and neck-

Fig. 44.—*Two Oranti of unusual size, ornamenting a tomb of the Third Century.*

laces, and an elaborate form of head-dress, all tending to individualise the figure (so to speak), and to rob it of its more general and symbolical signification. The accompanying specimen, taken from the cemetery that was made in the *arenaria* between the Catacombs of Thraso and of the Jordani, on the Via Salaria, has always attracted considerable attention because of the unusual size of the figures, which gave room for the expression of individual character, had the artist been desirous and capable of depicting it. They have been quite

R.S., ii. 360

Bullettino, 1873, 14.

recently destroyed by workmen engaged in digging the foundations of buildings connected with the villa of the late Victor Emmanuel; but good copies of them have been preserved in Mr. Parker's photographs. Besides the two principal figures, there is the bust of another woman painted on the space between two of the graves, with birds and festoons of flowers; and the common Biblical subjects, at the top, of Moses striking the rock, and Jonas cast out of the fish's mouth and reclining under the arbour. If there had been only three graves here, instead of four, we should have conjectured that the artist intended to depict the three ladies who were buried in them; and perhaps this really was his purpose, and the lowest grave may have been a later addition. De Rossi assigns for their date the latter half of the third century, or the beginning of the fourth: and what enables us to fix the date with certainty is the discovery, in the immediate neighbourhood, of that very curious and valuable inscription to the memory of one Severa, "who died on Friday, the 5th of November, and the 24th day of the moon," A.D. 269.[1]

Chamber of "the Five Saints."

Sometimes the very names are added to the figures of the *orante*, as in the example we have given in Plate XIV., from the Cemetery of St. Callixtus, and which we here reproduce in another form for the convenience of reference. It may be seen in a chamber which is immediately opposite the *cubiculum duplex* of the Deacon Severus, but which was made before it. The cubiculum of Severus belongs to one of the years between 296 and 303. Here, too, we are able to fix the date with confidence, because the inscription[2] states that it was made under the jurisdiction of Pope Marcellinus, and it is impossible that such an elaborate work, and so spacious a *luminare*, should have been executed after the persecution of Diocletian had begun.

The chamber of Dionysas and her companions was somewhat older, as we have said, but probably not very much older.

[1] See Epitaphs of the Catacombs, p. 19.

[2] Vol. i., pp. 349–351.

FIG. 45.—*Paintings of Five Saints, with their names, in a Chamber of San Callisto.*

It is a chamber almost square, with its side walls and roof covered with a slight coat of fine white plaster; the end wall, opposite the entrance, is covered with paintings on a coat of plaster somewhat less fine and white. In the right-hand wall there is an *arcosolium*, capable of containing two bodies, and the *arcosolium* at the end contained four, besides which there was another grave of the ordinary kind, but of double size (*bisomus*), made above the arch of the recess. This was not, *R.S.*, iii. 52–57. like the smaller graves on either side, a later addition—but must have been contemporaneous with the paintings, for the paintings come between the *arcosolium* and the *bisomus*, following the lines of both.[1] They represent five persons—two men and three women—Dionysas, Nemesius, Procopius, Eliodora, and Zoe, standing in the midst of a garden full of flowers and trees laden with fruit, among which a number of birds of various kinds, but all of gay plumage, are enjoying themselves.

Dogmatic teaching of the painting.

De Rossi says of this painting, that it is by far the brightest picture of paradise that he has seen in the Catacombs; and that the words IN PACE which follow each name, taken in connection with the beauty of the surrounding scene, and the attitude of prayer in which all the figures are standing, is a faithful pictorial rendering of the two ideas which are so frequently found in combination on written epitaphs, and of which he gives the following examples. Some of them have never *R.S.*, iii. 53. before been published :—

ZHCHC EN KΩ KAI EPΩTA ΤΠΕΡ HMΩN.
VIVAS IN PACE ET PETE PRO NOBIS.
CHRISTUS SPIRITUM (TUUM) IN PACE ET PETE PRO NOBIS.
BENE REFRIGERA ET ROGA PRO NOS.
SPIRITUS TUUS BENE REQUIESCAT IN DEO PETAS PRO SORORE TUA.
VINCENTIA IN ☧ PETAS PRO PHŒBE ET PRO VIRGINIO EJUS.
VIVAS IN DEO ET RO[GA].
SPIRITUS TUUS IN BONO ORA PRO PARENTIBUS TUIS.

[1] See page 119.

and lastly, in the most complete form,

IN ORATIONI[BU]S TUIS ROGES PRO NOBIS QUIA SCIMUS TE IN

Mayest thou live in the Lord, and pray for us.
Mayest thou live in peace, and pray for us.
May Christ [refresh, or receive thy] spirit in peace, and pray for us.
Be well refreshed, and pray for us.
May thy spirit rest well in God; pray for thy sister.
Vincentia in Christ; pray for Phœbe and her husband.
Live in God, and pray [for us].
Thy spirit [is] in good [*i.e.*, happiness, or God]; pray for thy parents.
Ask for us in thy prayers, because we know that thou art in Christ.[1]

But to return to the painting before us. We see on a lower part of the wall what nobody before De Rossi had ever detected, a sixth name added, ARCADIA IN PACE, but without any female figure. The words are written close to the head of a peacock, the well-known emblem of immortality; and perhaps this bird may have been intended to stand for the person, as we find elsewhere the names of individuals written over the heads of doves. And on a still lower part of the wall, outside the graves, are other birds, standing on the edges of vases full of water, at which they are refreshing themselves. This is a figure of the joys of Paradise, which we have met with before, and we may add to the illustrations of it which we then gave, the vision of St. Perpetua in prison, recorded by herself, in which she tells us she was assured of the release of her brother Dinocrates from all penal suffering and his entrance into everlasting happiness, as soon as she saw him drinking freely from the waters of a delicious fountain in the heavenly garden.[2]

Conjecture as to the persons here represented.

The addition of Arcadia to the five whose names had always been read on the painting, makes up the full number of persons that might have been buried in the two *arcosolia*, or in the

[1] Some of these will be found at greater length in the Epitaphs of the Catacombs, pp. 93, 94.

[2] Acta S. Perpetuæ apud Ruinart, § viii.; see also p. 55.

principal *arcosolium* and the *bisomus*. It is very probable that all these persons, or at least the five of them, were martyrs. This is suggested partly by the nature of the composition itself; partly also, by the fact that the paintings were cut through at a later period to admit of other graves,[1] for which room might easily have been found in other parts of the chamber. If we may draw a conclusion from the costume depicted by the artist, we should conjecture also that there was a considerable difference in the social position of the male and female members of this group. The dresses of the men are as plain and simple as possible, whereas the ladies are richly clad in purple and gold, with pearls in their head-dress and other ornaments, betokening a wealthy and distinguished rank. The use of purple dalmatics, such as these ladies wear, was at first reserved to members of the Imperial family; but at the time to which these pictures belong, it had been extended to all matrons by a decree of Aurelian, A.D. 270-275.

Were they martyrs contemporaneous with St. Sebastian?

Is it quite accidental, or is it an "undesigned coincidence," that the name of Zoe should occur in certain Acts of martyrdom belonging to the very same date, and under circumstances which might precisely account for the apparent difference of rank which we have noticed? This is a question we shall not attempt to answer; but at any rate we cannot withhold from our readers the circumstance mentioned by De Rossi, that in the Acts of St. Sebastian we read of a lady named Zoe, wife of an officer of the Imperial court, who is said to have been converted to Christianity, and to have suffered martyrdom about the year 287. She was drowned in the Tiber, and those who were detected in an attempt to recover her body also received the crown of martyrdom. Of course we are well aware that the Acts of St. Sebastian have not reached us in their original authentic form; but our readers have long since learnt that even spurious Acts (as they are called) often preserve to us the memory of true events which would otherwise have perished.[2]

[1] See Part I. pp. 171, 172.

[2] See Part I. pp. 23, 322, 461.

A family group represented.

At no great distance from the chamber of Dionysas and her companions there is another painting, which almost looks as if it had been executed by the same hand. This, too, consists of five persons; but their names are not given. From the

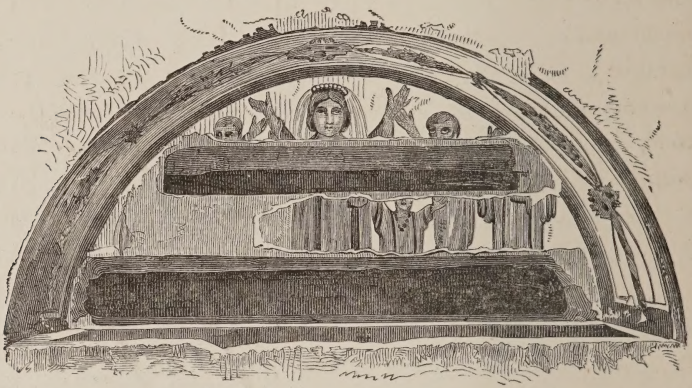


FIG. 46.—*A Family Group (apparently) painted on a tomb in Cemetery of St. Soteris.*

different sizes, however, of the figures, there seems clearly to have been an intention to identify the persons; it suggests the idea that they were all members of the one family. There is not the same rich variety of birds, fruits, and flowers around

FIG. 47.—*Ornamentation of the same Tomb.*

them; there is nothing to suggest that they were martyrs. There is only a narrow band or garland of flowers, running under the arch of the *arcosolium*, with a mask in the centre just over the head of the principal figure. This mask reminds

us rather of the ornamentation of Pagan art than of Christian; and so does another painting in the same neighbourhood, and probably of about the same date, consisting of ducks and goats lying on the ground, with the *thyrsus* across their backs. Our readers have seen a copy of it in Plate XIII.; and they might almost have suspected it of being the work of a Pagan hand, if the central compartment had not been occupied by a woman in the attitude of Christian prayer. The rest of the tomb is covered, not with subjects taken from the Bible, but with loose garlands of flowers. Pagan ornaments. *R.S.*, iii. 82.

The same might be said also of the half-naked recumbent The Seasons.

FIG. 48.—*An Emblem of Spring.*

FIG. 49.—*An Emblem of Summer.*

figures, which fill two sides of the ceiling of another chamber in St. Callixtus', belonging to the middle of the third century. The plaster has fallen away from the two corresponding compartments; but it is probable that they were of a similar kind, and that together they were intended to represent the seasons. The woman seems to hold in her hand the cup of some white *R.S.*, ii. 208.

flower, and was probably meant to denote spring, whilst the man, carrying a basin full of fruits, may be supposed to indicate the heats of summer.

R.S., ii. 357. De Rossi observes that the specimens of Christian art brought to light in that part of the Cemetery of St. Callixtus which we are now considering, manifest a greater tendency to multiply and to give prominence to natural symbolism of this kind than the decorations of any of the earlier *areæ;* and that he has noticed the same thing in other cemeteries belonging to the same period. The truth of this remark will commend itself to all who have studied with attention the forms of ornamentation which prevail throughout this area of St. Eusebius, as it is called; *i.e.*, the area in which the epitaph of that Pontiff has been found, and the excavation of which was certainly begun in the latter half of the third century. For the most part they are festoons of flowers, or branches of the vine with bunches of grapes or with birds, not executed with the same freedom as in earlier days, yet still not devoid of a certain amount of prettiness.

We select as our first example the following not ungraceful

Disguised representation of the Cross. Area IX. 34.

Fig. 50.—*Ornament of an Arcosolium in Area IX. of St. Callixtus.*

ornamentation of the arch over an arcosolium, at the back of which is a very interesting representation of a cross, cleverly disguised, as though the form had merely resulted from the accidental crossing of two branches of the shrubs growing in the garden. On either side of the cross is a bird, reminding us of the more ancient figure we have seen of two Christian souls, as fish at the sides of the cross-shaped anchor, and still more closely anticipating the scene which is of such frequent

recurrence in later mosaics and sculptures, the cross or the sacred monogram between two birds or sheep; all alike symbolising Christian souls clustering round the centre of their faith and hope and love. *R.S.*, iii. 78.

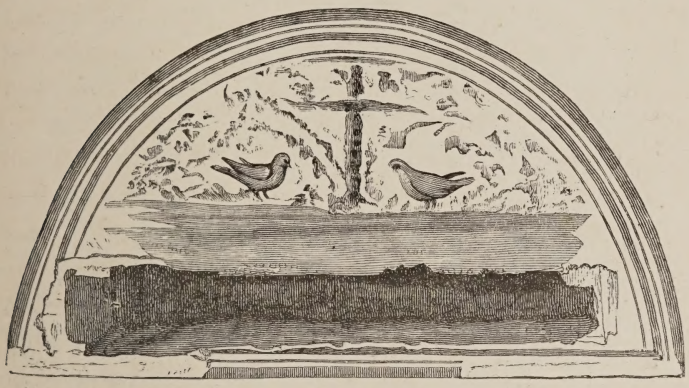


FIG. 51.—*Disguised representation of the Cross at back of the same Arcosolium.*

Another of the festoons to which we refer runs over the arch of an *arcosolium*, the back of which is occupied by a scene most rare in the ancient Christian cemeteries—a scene of ordinary civil life; indeed, De Rossi calls this painting quite unique in the Catacombs. A woman stands between stools or tables that are covered with vegetables, and a basket full of the same is on the ground. We can only conclude that the sale of these had been her humble occupation during life, and

Scenes from civil life represented.

R.S., iii. 79. Area X. 42.

FIG. 52.—*Ornament of an Arcosolium in Area X. of St. Callixtus.*

that her surviving relatives took this mode of recording it, instead of the more ordinary mode of inscribing it on the

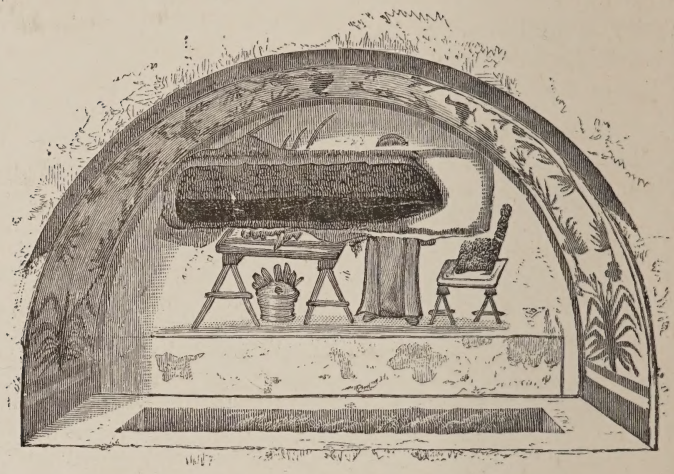


FIG. 53.—*Painting on the tomb of a seller of vegetables.*

epitaph, as the friends of another woman did on a tombstone in this same cemetery—

DE BIA NOBA
POLLECLA QUE ORDEU BENDIT DE BIA NOBA.[1]

"Pollecla who sold grain in New Street."

This picture having been cut in half by the excavation of a later grave, we cannot tell with certainty whether the woman was depicted in the usual attitude, with outstretched arms; but at least there is nothing to show that she was not. In a painting of the next century, however, in this same Catacomb, we find a man merely standing and holding in his hand an object which it is not easy to distinguish, but which seems to be the *pugillares* or tablets that are found in the hands of other figures on some Pagan monuments, as tokens of a certain official position. And it is possible that here also, the religious

R.S., ii. 261.

[1] B is written for V throughout this epitaph. The epitaph was first published by Bosio, Rom. Sott., p. 214.

idea not having supplied the motive of the picture, it may have been altogether omitted. From more ancient sepulchral paintings it was never absent. The one thought which seems to have occupied the minds of the survivors, if they wrote or painted anything in memory of those who "had died in the Lord," was the same as was expressed by St. Cyprian in the

FIG. 54.—*Ceiling of a Chamber in San Callisto, of the Third or Fourth Century.*

oft-quoted words, that the deceased, "secure about themselves, are solicitous for those whom they have left behind," and therefore pray for them.

Another earlier and almost singular example of representing an individual person in the paintings of the subterranean cemeteries occurs in the same Catacomb. It was evidently desired to give a real personal portrait, and for this purpose only

A painting on canvas in the Catacombs. *R.S.*, ii. 268. Area VII. d.

the bust was executed in fresco, and a painting of the head and face was made on canvas and fastened to the wall by nails, the marks of which yet remain. The canvas, of course, has perished, leaving a faint impression of the face upon the wall. De Rossi attributes it to the middle of the third century.

Decay of Christian symbolism.

These instances are sufficiently numerous to indicate the tendency of the artistic taste of the age; the gradual decay of

FIG. 55.—*Three Children in the fiery furnace, from Cemetery of St. Hermes (Bosio, p.* 565).

the ancient symbolism, and a preference for personal individual histories on the one hand, or of mere geometrical patterns on the other, wrought either in broad bands of colour, or with thin slabs of marble of various colours.

Biblical subjects retained.

It must not be supposed, however, that Biblical subjects ceased to be represented. They still retained their places on many walls and graves, or filled the whole vault of the ceiling. Even the picture of the greengrocer's stall, which

has been described, was flanked on one side by Moses striking the rock, and probably on the other also by some other of the old familiar scenes, which is now, however, too much defaced to allow us to recognise it. The histories which seem to have been used most frequently were those of the Adoration of the Infant Jesus by the Wise Men, and of the Three Children cast into the fiery furnace. The appropriateness of

Adoration of the wise men.

Three Children in the fiery furnace.

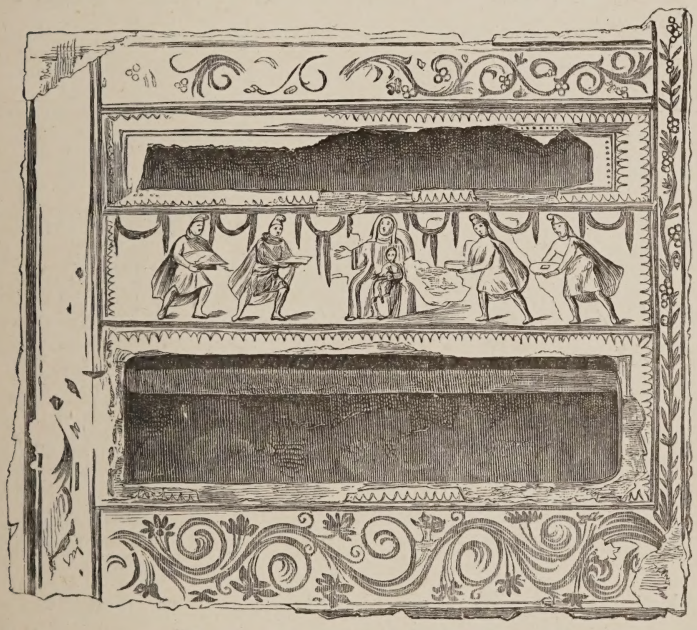


FIG. 56.—*Fresco in Catacomb of Domitilla, representing four Wise Men offering their Gifts.*

this latter history to the times of persecution is too obvious to need mention. It would be difficult to find one which conveyed a more salutary lesson of consolation and encouragement to the Church, so long as she was subjected, in the inscrutable wisdom of God's providence, to the fiery blast of persecution, whilst yet to many of her martyrs there was vouchsafed the sensible support and presence of Him for Whom they suffered, so that to them likewise the very flames

became "like the blowing of a wind bringing dew, and the fire touched them not at all, nor troubled them, nor did them any harm." [1] This subject does not appear at all amongst the most ancient paintings; but it is very frequent among those which belong to the end of the third century, and a still later period.

The same may be said also of the adoration of the infant Jesus by the wise men from the East. De Rossi speaks of more than twenty paintings of this scene in the Catacombs, and it is still more common in sculpture; but none are earlier than the third century. The Holy Child is always represented, as

FIG. 57.—*Fresco in Cemetery of SS. Peter and Marcellinus, representing only two Wise Men offering their Gifts.*

the Evangelist tells us the wise men found Him, "with Mary His mother." [2] He is sitting on her lap, and generally (in three-fourths of the examples) three Magi stand before Him. In three or four instances, however, she occupies the middle of the scene; and here, in order to keep a proper balance between the two sides of the picture, the number of the Magi is increased or diminished; there are either four, as in the Cemetery of Domitilla, or only two, as in that of SS. Peter and Marcellinus. It is clear, however, that three was already

[1] Dan. iii. 50. See St. Cyprian, Epist. vi. 4; Sergio, &c.

St. Matthew ii. 11.

known as the traditional number;[1] for even in one of the instances we have quoted we can still trace the original sketch of the artist, designing another arrangement of the scene with three figures only; then, mistrusting the result, he abandoned the attempt, and sacrificed historic truth to the exigencies of his art, just as, at a somewhat later period, the carver of a marble vase boldly places our Blessed Lady between six shepherds and six Magi, that the number may correspond with the other side of his work, where our Blessed Lord sits in the middle of the twelve Apostles. De Rossi assigns the two examples we have given to the first and second half of the third century respectively.

Susanna and the Elders, types of the Church and her enemies, the Jews, and the Gentiles.

There is yet another scene from the Book of Daniel, of which there are one or two representations in the Catacombs. The one which we are going to describe is in the Cemetery of St. Callixtus, and is symbolical in character; but Garrucci describes another elsewhere, which is more literal and historical. In our own picture we have a lamb standing between two wolves; and had there been no legend added, we should have thought we had done enough to explain it, if we quoted the words spoken when our Lord sent forth the seventy-two disciples "into every city and place whither He Himself was to come"—"Behold I send you as lambs among wolves." And no doubt this was the saying which suggested to the artist the particular form of his illustration. We learn, however, from

FIG. 58.—*Susanna and the Elders, from the Cemetery of St. Callixtus.*

[1] It is generally said that St. Leo the Great, or St. Maximus of Turin, are the first witnesses to this tradition. Origen, however, implies it; and the evidence of the monuments is all on the same side.—Patrizi de Evangel. iii., diss. xxvii. pars. 2da.

himself that he also meant a good deal more; for over the head of the lamb he wrote the name of *Susanna*, and over one of the wolves *Senioris* (for *Seniores*) or elders. Neither are we left in any uncertainty as to the sense in which the story of Susanna and the elders was understood at that time. "We are able to apprehend," says Hippolytus,[1] "the real meaning of all that befel Susanna; for we see it fulfilled in the present condition of the Church. Susanna prefigured the Church, and Joachim, her husband, Christ, and the garden, the calling of the saints, who are planted like fruitful trees in the Church; and Babylon is the world; and the two elders are set forth as a figure of the two peoples that plot against the Church; the one, namely, of the circumcision, and the other of the Gentiles. Both these strive to raise persecutions and afflictions against the Church, and seek how they may corrupt her, though they do not agree with each other. They watch and busy themselves with the dealings of the Church; and when they conspire to destroy any of the saints, they watch for a fit time, and enter the house of God while all there are praying and praising God, and seize some of them and carry them off, and keep hold of them, saying, "Come, consent with us, and worship our god; and if not, we will bear witness against you." And when they refuse, they drag them before the court, and accuse them of acting contrary to the decrees of Cæsar, and condemn them to death. All these things were figuratively represented in the blessed Susanna for our sakes, that we who now believe in God might not regard the things that are now done in the Church as strange, but believe them all to have been set forth in figure by the patriarchs of old, as the Apostle also says, "All these things happened to them in figure, and they are written for our correction, upon whom the ends of the world are come."[1]

[1] See the Writings of Hippolytus in the Ante-Nicene Library, vol. i. pp. 478–481.

[2] 1 Cor. x. 11.

We have reserved to the last all mention of that singular painting which was set before our readers in Plate VIII. of our first volume, and which we there described[1] as representing two martyrs (probably Parthenius and Calocerus) on their trial before the tribunal of the emperor. The general subject which it was intended to represent can hardly be called in question. It is certain, both from internal evidence and from comparison with other paintings, that it is a judicial scene; but there may be room for some difference of opinion as to a few of the details.

Scene from the trial of a martyr.

The painting is very remarkable on every account, both for its subject and its execution. For, from the whole cycle of works of Christian art belonging to the first three centuries, no other certain example can be produced of a representation of the trial or sufferings of a martyr. Moreover, the artist has manifestly taken unusual pains to put life and character into his figures; and it must be allowed that his efforts have not been altogether unsuccessful. The anger and indignation of the judge are well expressed in his attitude and action, whilst in the face of the martyr there shines forth a certain reflection of firm faith, and a sense of calm or even joyful security amid all that may await him. The action and expression of the man who is turning away and going off from the scene also clearly denotes disappointment and discomfiture.

R.S., ii. 359.

This person wears a wreath round his head, and was probably the priest (*sacerdos coronatus*), who was present to inaugurate the sacrificial rite which was always proposed to the accused Christians as a condition of their discharge, but which would have been equivalent to an act of apostasy. The judge who stands on the raised platform is clothed in tunic and pallium; and he, too, wears a wreath of ivy round his head. It is conjectured both by De Rossi and by Garrucci that it is intended to be the emperor himself. The martyr condemned is a very young man. He wears only the white tunic, striped

R.S., ii. 220.

[1] See Part I. p. 345.

with purple; and he is represented as opening both his arms, as though he were answering the question proposed to him with calmness and courage. The fourth and last figure, of a man standing by his side, is unhappily too mutilated and defaced to allow us to speak with any confidence as to its character. It almost looks as though he were holding a roll of parchment or a volume in his hands; but whether he was arraigned on the same charge as the prisoner, or was himself the accuser, or perhaps an assessor of the judge, we cannot pretend to define. All that we know, or can with any reason conjecture,[1] as to the history of the chamber in which this painting is to be seen, makes us incline to accept the first of these suppositions rather than either of the others; but the question cannot now be decided. There was once another painting on the opposite wall, apparently representing another act in the same drama; but in its present condition, De Rossi dares not hazard any positive statement of its subject.

This painting occurs in the area of the Catacomb of St. Callixtus which contains the epitaph of St. Eusebius. In the adjoining *areæ*, which take their name from St. Soteris, there is not a single *cubiculum* which is decorated throughout with painting; but there are a few painted *arcosolia*. In the most ancient of these *areæ* there are six or seven of these; in the second, only two; in the third, one; and in the latest, none at all. We gather from this that, as time went on, towards the close of the third century and beginning of the fourth, artists became more scarce; at any rate they were much less employed in the Catacombs. By far the best painting of all in the *areæ* of St. Soteris is that which we have seen of the five saints—Dionysas and her companions; and it is also the oldest.

R.S., iii. 77, 49.

There is evidence that, about the same time, mosaics and marbles were occasionally used to ornament the chapels. The example of this, which is most familiar to visitors to the Cata-

[1] See Part I. p. 345.

combs, occurs in the chamber in which St. Eusebius was buried, and belongs, therefore, to the early part of the fourth century. The ceiling of this chamber was divided into hexagonal and polygonal compartments, in very brilliant colours, filled with birds and flowers alternately. But the *arcosolia* were covered with mosaics, and the walls with marbles. All is now sadly ruined; but it is still possible to distinguish

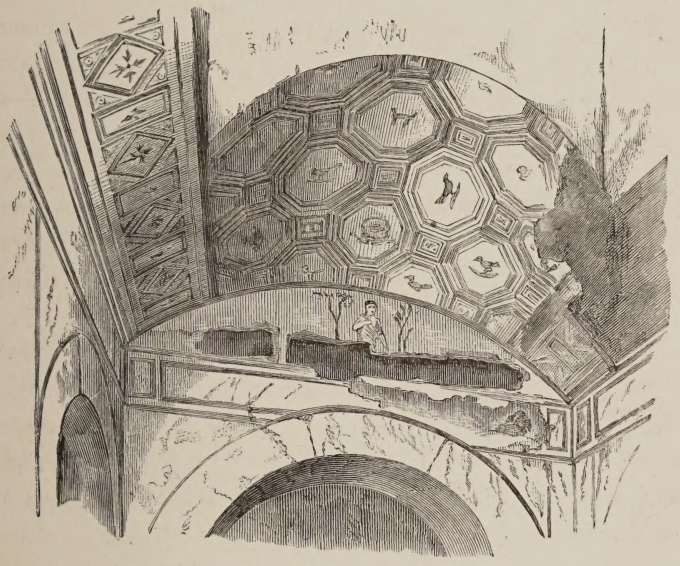


FIG. 59.—*Ceiling of Cubiculum of St. Eusebius in Area VI. of St. Callixtus.*

among the remains of the mosaic work traces of one of the most common Christian symbols—a double-handled vessel, with a bird on either side of it; also certain winged figures, which probably represented the seasons, and a few other accessories of ornament; but the main figures and general design have perished. The only trace of Scriptural subjects upon the walls may be seen in our woodcut—the Good Shepherd, painted above the *arcosolium*.

CHAPTER III.

PAINTINGS OF THE FOURTH CENTURY.

A remarkable painting of the Good Shepherd in Catacomb of St. Callixtus examined in detail—Scenes from the life of Moses, and multiplication of the loaves and fishes—The old subjects continued, but treated less symbolically—Paintings of the Liberian area of San Callisto, much defaced in consequence of bad quality of the plaster—First appearance in painting of the monogram—Different forms of it—First appearance of the nimbus—Its meaning, and history of its use—Parable of wise and foolish virgins—Denial of our Lord by St. Peter—The manna—Martyrs or other saints welcoming the deceased to heaven—Conjectural interpretation of a singular painting in San Callisto—The Three Children in the fiery furnace accompanied by the Angel of the Lord—Gradual disuse of painting, first of the chambers, and then of the tombs.

WITH the conversion of Constantine a new epoch dawned upon the Church; and if Christian art had still retained the vigour of her youth, a new and splendid field would have now been opened for her exertions. But she was gradually departing further and further from the use of classical types, and before the close of the fourth century she gave tokens of degenerating into that stiff conventionality of style which in its full development goes under the name of Byzantine.

There are a few paintings belonging to the earlier half of the century, and carrying on, at least partially, the artistic traditions of an earlier age, which are sufficiently interesting to deserve detailed examination. One in particular is a painting in which the parable of the Good Shepherd may be considered to have reached its most perfect development. Representations of this subject became gradually more and more rare,

A remarkable painting of the Good Shepherd described

when the ages of persecution had ceased. It is not to be found on a single epitaph bearing a date between the conversion of Constantine and the end of the sixth century, though frequently repeated on the tombstones of the earlier period. In paintings also it occurs less frequently than before. In a fresco on the walls of a subterranean cemetery in the country,[1]

FIG. 60.—*Fresco ornamenting an Arcosolium in Cemetery of Generosa.*

belonging apparently to the end of the fourth century, it was deemed necessary to add the title *Pastor* to the figure. In the instance now before us, which belongs to the earlier half of the century, the figure is surrounded with a rich and varied *entourage*, adding greatly to its significance.

[1] See Part I. p. 195.

The shepherd here occupies his usual position in the centre of the painting, bearing the lost sheep upon his shoulders. He stands amid trees in a garden, and has another sheep or goat on either side of him. But because he has still other sheep also which are not yet of his fold, but whom it is necessary that he should bring, and that they should hear his voice,[1] therefore two Apostles—probably St. Peter and St. Paul, the Apostles of the Jews and Gentiles respectively, and representing therefore the whole Apostolate from the beginning to the end—are seen hurrying away from his side to fulfil the mission entrusted to them. He had said, "Going, teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost;"[2] and here they take of the waters of Divine grace which flow from the mystical Rock of Christ, to pour them on the heads of the sheep which surround them; thus illustrating in the most graphic manner the words of St. Cyprian, that it is by means of this water that we are made the sheep of Christ.[3] The sheep receive the proffered gift according to their different dispositions: whilst one obeys the call, another turns his back to it; whilst one with uplifted head drinks in the message with eager attention, another keeps his head steadily towards the ground, intent on the pasturage which is offered him in the goods of the natural world. And the water which is made to fall upon them seems to bear a certain proportion to these varieties of attitude, which we have supposed to betoken a difference of inward feeling.

and explained.

R.S. ii. 350.

Moses striking the rock and taking off his shoe.

This remarkable painting covers the back of the wall above an *arcosolium*. On one side of the same recess, to the right of the spectator, appears the figure of Moses, which our readers have already seen in page 108. He too is represented in an unusual manner. Instead of being depicted alone in the act of striking the rock, one of the children of Israel stands in front of him, eagerly quenching his thirst at the miraculous stream;

[1] St. John x. 16. [2] St. Matt. xxviii. 20.

[3] Hæc est aqua in Ecclesiâ sanctâ, quæ oves facit. *Epist. lxxi.*

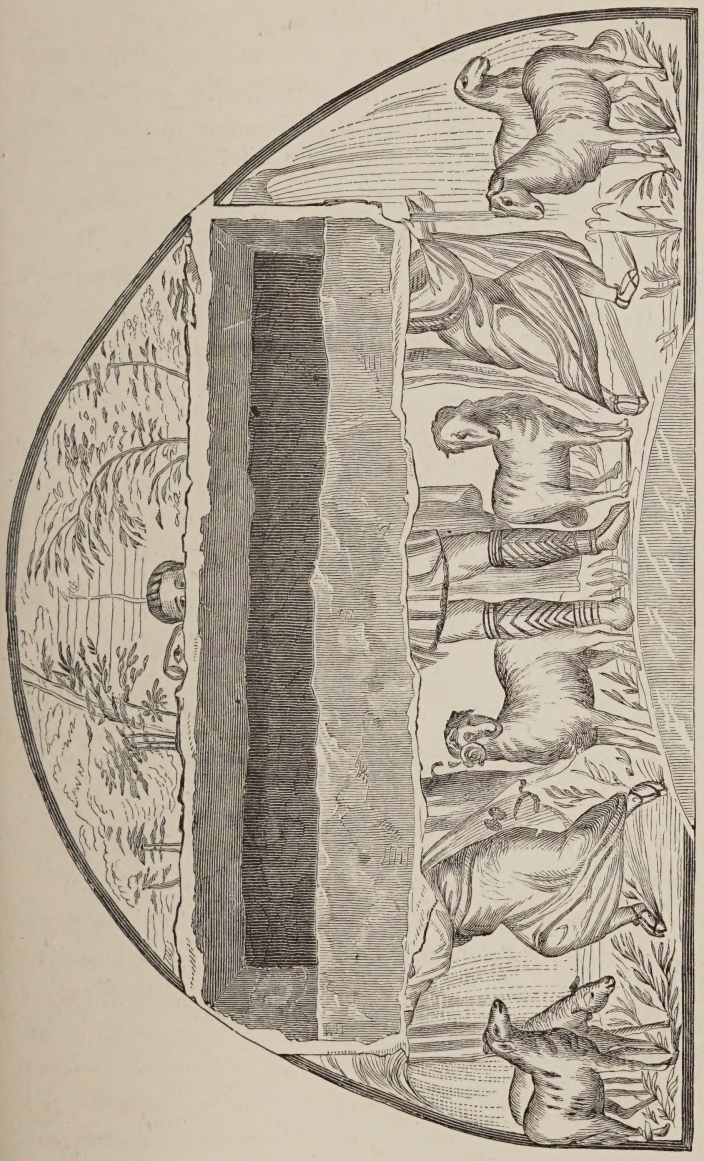


Fig. 61.—*The Good Shepherd, two of the Apostles, and the Water flowing from the Rock, united in one Allegorical Composition.*

and behind him is another scene from the life of Moses, viz., his taking off his shoes before drawing near to witness the manifestation of the presence of God, Whose call to him is indicated by the hand issuing from the cloud. And the attention of our readers has been already called to the marked difference between the two portraits of the Jewish legislator, indicating the artist's desire to suggest a thought of "the Leader of the new people of Israel" rather than of the old. It is a pictorial rendering of the same idea which found expression in the next century by the mouth of St. Maximus, speaking from the episcopal chair of Turin, and saying that our Blessed

R.S., iii. 79.

Fig. 62.—*Two scenes in one picture: Moses taking off his shoes, and Moses striking the rock.*

Lord "had vouchsafed to give to Peter a participation in His own name; for as, according to St. Paul, Christ was the Rock, so Peter was by Christ made a rock also, the Lord saying to him, 'Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church;' because, as water flowed from the rock for the Lord's people thirsting in the desert, so the fountain of a life-giving confession flowed from the mouth of Peter to the whole world wearied with the dryness of unbelief."[1]

Multiplication of loaves and fishes.

On the opposite side of the same arched recess there is a painting of our Lord between two of His Apostles, laying His

[1] Opp. p. 219, ed. 1784.

hands on two fish and a basket of bread which they present to Him, while six other baskets of bread lie at His feet.

Here, then, we have precisely the same group of doctrines brought together as in the sacramental chambers—Baptism, in the water flowing from the rock; Penance, in the wandering sheep brought back on the shoulders of the Good Shepherd, and the Holy Eucharist in the multiplication of the loaves and fishes. But it is obvious to remark the far nearer approach to literalism in this representation, as compared with the more secret and mystical allusions to the same doctrines which characterised the paintings of the second or third century.

Old subjects treated more literally or historically.

De Rossi attributes these to the earlier half of the fourth century. At least he says it cannot be later than that; for one of the paintings has been cut through and spoilt, not in the usual manner, by a grave, but by a niche made to receive a lamp, the smoke from which has quite obliterated parts of the figures. This must have been done whilst yet the chamber was in use as a place of assembly for purposes of religious worship; yet there is no token of the tomb ever having been the sepulchre of a martyr. There is no trace on the walls of any inscriptions by the pious pilgrims of the fifth and sixth centuries, and no staircase anywhere in the neighbourhood, by which pilgrims could have gained access to it from the outer world. Indeed, the tomb itself is much too low to have been used as an altar; the altar must have been portable, not fixed, and perhaps the episcopal chair may have been originally placed against the wall under the principal painting. Certainly it would have been difficult to find a more appropriate selection of subjects for the ornamentation of a Christian teacher's pulpit; the preaching of the Word, and the administration of the sacraments of Baptism, Penance, and the Holy Eucharist. We cannot abandon the idea of the chamber having been used as a place of assembly; for, besides the usual corresponding chamber on the opposite side of the gallery, the *arcosolium* of that second chamber was destroyed,

Precise date of this painting.

and a third chamber, or rather a long, wide gallery, was excavated at the back of it, which would not have been necessary to gain more room for burying the dead, but only for the accommodation of the living. There is no shaft, however, to the open air, which would seem to indicate that it was made during some period of severe persecution, when it was necessary to observe great care and secrecy, as, for instance, during the persecution of Diocletian. For these reasons we are inclined to prefer the beginning of the fourth century as the probable date of this painting, rather than any later period.

Paintings of the Liberian area of San Callisto.

It will facilitate our present purpose, which is to impress upon our readers as clear an idea as we can of the changes which came over the face of Christian art in each succeeding period of the first four or five hundred years of its existence, if we go through a certain portion of the Catacombs belonging to the particular period under review, and note all the paintings it contains. It is for this reason that in our last chapter so many of our examples were taken from the areæ of St. Soteris in the Catacomb of Callixtus. And the same motive bids us select for the fourth century another area of the same necropolis; an area which stands in our map as No. XII., and to which De Rossi has given the name of the Liberian area, because the dates of the epitaphs and other indications make it certain that it was used during the Pontificate of Liberius, *i.e.*, in the latter half of the fourth century.

R.S., iii. 247.

The chief characteristics of this area are an almost continual series of *arcosolia*, a large number of chambers of unusual dimensions, and very spacious *luminaria*. But as in its architecture it is superior to older parts of the Catacombs (as also in the materials of some of its decorations, marbles, and mosaics), so in its paintings it is very inferior. Indeed, the first impression of the visitor is, that there are no paintings in it at all. A more careful examination, however, suffices to correct this error. Two of the chambers, and several of the *arcosolia*, were once covered with paintings, but the plaster

Many of them have perished, from the badness of the plaster on which they were executed.

on which they were executed was of so poor a kind that all traces of them have well-nigh disappeared. A gradual deterioration in the quality of the plaster has constantly been observed to mark the successive periods of excavation; but in this area the deterioration has reached its utmost limits. The plaster on the walls of the crypts of Lucina, and the chambers of the earliest area of St. Callixtus, was made of ground marble; it was of exquisite fineness, hard and dry, and of great durability; but the plaster of the chambers of which we are now speaking has thrown out such a blossom as almost to efface all the colours of the decoration. De Rossi has taken great pains to revive them, and has so far succeeded as to be able to tell us the general character of all, and even to give us trustworthy copies of some of them.

First appearance in painting of the monogram.

Here is one, in which (for the first time in the Cemetery of Callixtus) we see the Constantinian monogram painted above

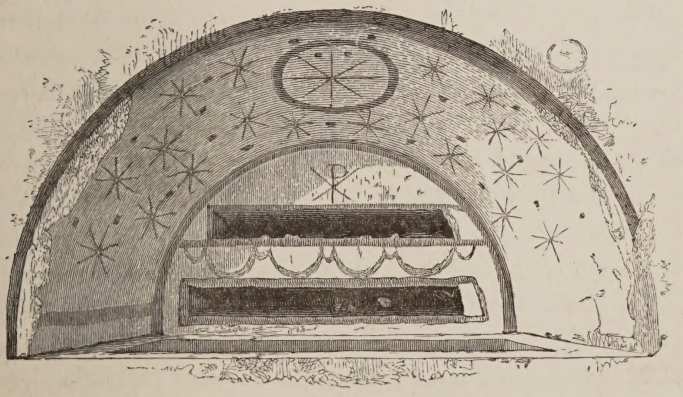


Fig. 63.—*Earliest instanctofe he Monogram as part of the Ornamentation of an Arcosolium in the Cemetery of Callixtus.*

one of the graves. The only other example of this symbol entering into the decorations of a chamber in this Catacomb is in the Papal crypt, where it appears in the centre of the arch of the doorway, and forms part of the new ornamentation that was given to that chapel either by Pope Damasus or by

Sixtus III., *i.e.*, between A.D. 370 and 440.[1] It is probable that the stars which form the principal part of the decoration of this *arcosolium* were themselves also intended to stand as substitutes for the monogram, just as we shall presently see the monogram used for the star in the Catacomb of Cyriaca: at least, one of them is made much larger than the rest, and enclosed within a circle; it occupies the centre of the vault, just where the monogram might have been expected, or where, in earlier times, the Good Shepherd or some principal figure of the well-known Biblical cycle would have been placed. De Rossi considers it probable that the eight rays of the star were formed out of the combination of the letter X with a plain equilateral cross.

R.S., iii. 250.

The sign of the cross in continual use, but not often represented.

The cross is the sign, *par excellence*, of Christ and of a Christian. It is especially so called by Clement of Alexandria.[2] It was the "Thau (T) which was to be marked upon the foreheads of the men that sighed in the midst of Jerusalem;"[3] and the sign, also, wherewith "the servants of God were signed in their foreheads" in the Apocalyptic vision[4] of the true Catholic Jerusalem.[5] No wonder, then, that the first Christians used to sign themselves with it "at every step, at every coming in and going out, when they put on their shoes and their clothes, at the bath, at the table, when the lights are brought in at night, on going to bed, on sitting down—in short, at every change of action."[6] On the other hand, it was held accursed by the Jews, and it indicated a painful and disgraceful death to the Gentiles. No wonder, then, that the Christians should abstain from presenting it to the public gaze. It was one thing to make a sign upon themselves which could be modified both as to distinctness and publicity according to circumstances, and quite another to

[1] See Part I., p. 293.
[2] Strom. vi. 11.
[3] Ezech. ix. 4.
[4] Apoc. vii. 3.
[5] Tertullian c. Marc., iii. 22. See Epitaphs of the Catacombs, p. 167
[6] Tertullian de Corona, 3.

set up the same sign in a clear and definite form in painting upon the walls. If they ventured upon doing this at all, we should expect that it would be only in some disguised form, such as might be transparent to the initiated, and pass unnoticed by others, as in the form of the mast and sail-yards of a vessel, or the apparently accidental arrangement of the boughs and branches of a tree, such as we have seen in Figures 43, 51, in pages 154, 165.

Different ways of viewing the cross.

In fourth century as a sign of triumph.

But after the conversion of Constantine and the rapid extension of Christianity, there was no longer the same necessity for concealment. The cross might now be exhibited publicly. But in what form should it be shown? The scene on Mount Calvary might be considered with reference to its actual circumstances, and therefore depicted as the most awful of crimes on the part of the agents, or the most sublime of sacrifices on the part of the Victim; but it might also be considered only with reference to its results, and then it was the way to glory,[1] the price of victory, a very crown of triumph. It was this latter point of view that naturally most recommended itself to men who had lived in the midst of combats, and aspired to the palm of martyrdom. This was also the most natural aspect of the cross to be taken by men who were witnesses of the triumph of the Church, and who saw in her history a sort of repetition or reflection of the Passion and Resurrection of her Lord.

In a later age, when the profession of Christianity had become universal, and men were in danger of forgetting its obligations amid the seductive pleasures of the world, it might be useful or necessary to bring more prominently forward the sufferings of their Divine Head, and to put them in mind that they had been bought with a great price, that the crucified One was their Exemplar, that "Christ having suffered in the flesh," it behoved them also to be "armed with the same thought,"[2] and to crucify their flesh with its affections and

[1] St. Luke xxiv. 26.

[2] 1 Peter iv. 1.

lusts. But in the first hour of the Church's triumph we are not surprised to find that the cross appeared rather as an emblem of victory than as a type of suffering. It took its place among the most conspicuous ornaments of the *arcosolia*, or on the vaulted roofs of the chambers, and in different shapes.

Different forms of the monogram.

The principal forms in which the cross appears is the monogram in one or other of its numerous varieties; but there is

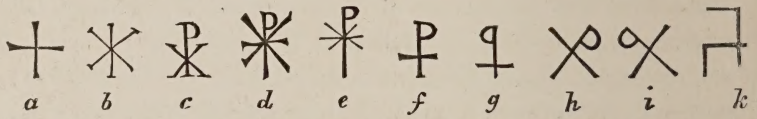


FIG. 64.—*Different forms of the Cross and Monogram.*

some difficulty in determining the precise periods of the introduction and continuance of the use of any of these. Even the precise form of the original monogram of Constantine is still a subject of dispute. Eusebius[1] tells us, on the authority of the Emperor himself, that, on the eve of his encounter with Maxentius, our Blessed Lord appeared to him in the night, bearing a cross, and that He commanded him to have a similar representation made, and to use it as a protection against the enemy. Wherefore, on the following day, Constantine caused artists to be summoned, and enjoined them to make a facsimile of what he should describe to them. Thereupon they took a gilt spear, fastened to it a cross-bar, and surmounted the whole with a garland set with gold and precious stones, in the centre of which they placed, as a sign of the saving Name, the two first letters which formed it, viz., P crossed in the middle by X (χιαζομένου τοῦ Ρ κατὰ τὸ μεσαίτατον). And this sign the emperor henceforth wore upon his helmet.

According to Lactantius,[2] he also caused the shields of his soldiers to be marked in the same way, *transversâ litterâ X summo capite circumflexo Christum in scutis notat.* This description by Lactantius seems most closely to correspond with

[1] Vit. Const. i. 31. [2] De Mort. Persec. 44.

our form *h*. But the expressions of Eusebius are less definite, and might be meant either for *c*, *f*, or *h*. This latter form occurs on the coins of Magnentius, A.D. 350, and other emperors; whereas, on those of Constantius and his sons, who were so much nearer to the date of the original vision, the form *c* is more frequently met with, side by side (in some instances) with the simple cross. After the separation of the Eastern Empire from that of the West, under Arcadius and Honorius, we more frequently meet with the form X on the *labarum*, or that which we have marked *b*, whereas *c*, *f*, and *h* gradually disappear. The dates of these various forms, when inscribed upon gravestones, belong to another branch of our subject.[1] Here we need only observe that the form *c* was the most frequently employed in decoration, and that the form *k*, or *crux gammata*, appears on the garments of certain persons who are figured in the wall paintings of the Catacombs after the middle of the third century. We have shown elsewhere that this form of the cross was no invention of the Christians, nor any part of their earliest cycle of symbols, but was chosen by them, in accordance with that disposition, of which they gave so many indications, the desire to discover in all directions new connecting links and points of resemblance between their own and other systems of religious belief and symbols.

On monuments later than the middle of the fourth century the monogram is very commonly accompanied by A Ω, Alpha and Omega, as a symbol of Him who is the Beginning and End of all things.

First appearance of the nimbus.

In this same Liberian area we find also the earliest specimen which the Catacomb of Callixtus has revealed to us of the nimbus. "The nimbus," says the Count de Saint-Laurent,[2] "is a pictorial sign, generally of circular form, which surrounds the head, and represents light. By some ancient writers it has been confounded with the crown, and called by the same

[1] See Epitaphs of the Catacombs, pp. 166–170.

[2] Guide de l'Art Chrétien, tom. ii. p. 6.

name; but it differs from a crown in this, that it does not rest upon the head, but is supposed to be suspended over it. The nimbus and the crown have this in common, that they both express an idea of dignity; and examples are not wanting in which one of these emblems has been used to express that particular kind of dignity which, according to later usage, belongs more appropriately to the other. It is now the established practice to use the crown as a sign of royalty, and the nimbus of sanctity. And if the Saints are sometimes represented as crowned, this is because they are described in Holy Scripture as reigning in heaven.

Its meaning.

"The nimbus was in use before the Christian era, and has continued among some Pagan people since that time. We need not enter upon any discussion as to its origin; it is sufficient to say that it is intimately connected with the double signification which has always attached to light and to the human head. The personification, therefore, of the Sun had special claims to the use of this ornament. It does not appear, however, that the primary idea in attaching the nimbus to individuals was to represent them as invested with the Sun itself. Rather the word would seem intended to indicate a luminous cloud, which only reflected the Sun's rays."

Its use by Pagans.

When Christians began to make use of it, it was in honour of Him who said of Himself that He was the Light. And although they could not be ignorant, of course, of the use that was being made of the figure by the social world in the midst of which they lived, the example of others was hardly necessary to suggest it to them. Imagery of the same kind occurs in Holy Scripture itself. The "horned face"[1] of Moses on his descent from Mount Sinai could hardly have been understood in any other way. "The glory of the Lord" had manifested itself to the children of Israel as "a burning fire."[2] In the vision of the Ancient of Days vouchsafed to Daniel,[3] "a

Scriptural imagery suggesting it.

[1] Exod. xxxiv. 30. [2] Exod. xxiv. 17. [3] Dan. vii. 10.

swift stream of fire issued forth from before Him;" or, as it is expressed in the similar vision[1] in the Apocalypse, "His face was as the sun shineth in his power." Finally, the great sign which appeared in heaven was of a woman "clothed with the sun."[2]

In all these instances there is the same fundamental idea; and it was only natural that Christians should adopt for the pictorial representation of it that particular form (a circular disc) with which they were already familiar. When did they begin to use it? Probably as soon as they could give public honour to representations of our Blessed Lord, *i.e.*, in the fourth century. There certainly is no proof that they ever used it before.

Period and manner of its use by Christians,

In the glass cups or plates found in the Catacombs, of which we shall have to speak in a later chapter, it is very rarely to be seen; and it is generally allowed that most of these objects range from the middle of the third to the middle of the fourth century. In many of them, crowns may be seen by the side of the Saints, being offered to them by birds, or held in their own hands, but not placed upon their heads; in some also our Lord is represented in the act of crowning SS. Peter and Paul, or others; but the *nimbus* itself will scarcely be found on a dozen of them altogether. In the mosaics, on the other hand, which belong to a later age, it is far otherwise. In those of the church (or mausoleum, whichever it should be rightly called) of Sta. Costanza, belonging to the age of Constantine, our Lord has the *nimbus*, the Apostles have not. A similar distinction is to be noted in the mosaics of St. Agatha in Ravenna of the year 400; but here our Lord has it in its more modern form, enclosing a cross, and on the head of the angels it is unornamented. The same decorated form of the *nimbus* is used on the head of Christ in the mosaics of Sta. Sabina (A.D. 424) and of St. Paul's (A.D. 441), both in Rome; where the apostles, evangelists, and others either have it plain, or none at all.

[1] Apoc. i. 16. [2] Ibid. xii. 1.

in fifth century,

In some of the mosaics of the fifth century at Ravenna, it is placed not only on the head of our Lord, His holy mother, and the angels, but also on those of Justinian and his wife Theodora, and at St. Mary Major's in Rome (A.D. 433) even on that of Herod.[1] In MSS. of the seventh, eighth, and ninth centuries, and in some of the painted windows of the Middle Ages, it is given to the sun and moon, to Pharaoh, Saul, Balaam, Constantine II., and all the bishops of the Second Council of Nice, to Judas, the foolish virgins (as well as the wise), the devil, and the beast of the Apocalypse! Probably, in these instances, it was intended to do honour to the office, and not to the individuals; to the apostleship, the profession of virginity, the angelic nature, the kingly or episcopal office, and strength and power generally.

in Middle Ages,

in fourth century.

But let us return to its more ancient use among Christians. Old Christian writers[2] tell us that on the head of Christ and His Saints it denoted the light of eternal glory with which they are crowned in heaven. Garrucci[3] considers that in the fifth century Christian artists either used or omitted it indifferently, but that after that time its use became universal. Martigny,[4] a more recent and cautious authority, distinguishes with greater accuracy when he says that it was used for our Blessed Lord occasionally before the days of Constantine, and constantly afterwards; for the angels, from the beginning of the fifth century, and generally before the end of the sixth; but that it was not till towards the end of the seventh that it became the rule for all Saints indifferently. And De Rossi, who is more accurate than either, says it began to be given to the Blessed Virgin and SS. Peter and Paul, as well as to our Lord, as early as the fourth century.

Bullettino, 1867, p. 44.

We have said that it appears in an area of the Catacomb of

[1] Ciampini, Vet. Monum., i. p. 200.
[2] Isidor. Etym., xix. 31. Honor. Aug., I., c. 133.
[3] Vetri, &c., p. 141.
[4] Dictionnaire des Antiquités Chrétiennes, p. 499, in verb. *Nimbus*.

Callixtus which belongs to that period; but as there is some difficulty in the interpretation of that painting, we will first produce a more simple example, taken from the principal *arcosolium* of a chamber in the Catacomb of Cyriaca, which was brought to light some fifteen or twenty years ago, in consequence of the enlargement of the Campo Santo, or modern cemetery of Rome.

The whole of the back of the recess of this *arcosolium* is occupied by a representation of the parable of the wise and foolish virgins. Our Lord stands in the middle, clad in a tunic and cloak, and is in the act of raising His right hand as though to invite the five maidens of different ages, who are coming towards Him holding aloft burning torches in their hands. On His left the five foolish virgins stand unnoticed, their extinguished torches either resting on their shoulders or turned downwards to the ground. All ten are without any

Bullettino, 1863, 78.

Fig. 65.—*The Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins, on the back of an arcosolium in the Catacomb of Cyriaca.*

Parable of the wise and foolish virgins

veils on their heads, and wear loose tunics, ornamented with a double strip of purple, just as other young girls were wont to be depicted on the sepulchral monuments of the same period.

at the tomb of a virgin.

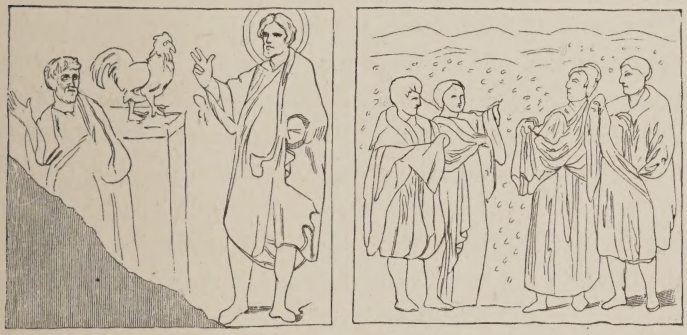
Above the arch of this tomb is the figure of an *orante,* probably the occupant of the grave; and there is reason to believe that she was a virgin consecrated to God. This conjecture (of De Rossi's) does not depend merely upon the choice of subject for the decoration of the tomb, but upon this circumstance, coupled with the large number of inscriptions found in this particular cemetery, to the memory of "holy virgins," "sacred virgins," "virgins devoted to God," or "the handmaids of God;" and all belonging to the fourth or fifth century. It is unquestionable (he says) that about the middle of the fourth century, or a little later, there began in Rome houses of virgins and widows, living together under certain rules of discipline, like monasteries; and the finding of so many of these epitaphs in one place, and of this date, warrant us in conjecturing that here, near the Basilica of St. Laurence, there was one of the earliest convents of the Roman Church, just as there was another also near the Basilica of St. Agnes.

Denial of our Lord by St. Peter,

why so frequently represented.

On the sides of the same arched vault are two other scenes, in one of which our Lord again appears with the nimbus. The cock on the pillar shows that He is in the act of foretelling to Peter his threefold denial of Him, a scene which—whatever may have been the motive for its selection—is continually repeated on the sarcophagi of this same period. Perhaps it was chosen from a motive of humility, according to the interpretation of the incident which we find in some of the Homilies of the Fathers, who connect very beautifully St. Peter's fall with the high office for which he was destined, in this way: they say that he was allowed to fall in a more signal manner than any other of the Apostles, because to him were to be entrusted the keys of the kingdom of heaven. It was necessary, therefore, that he should be a penitent, lest innocence should refuse

to open the gate to those who had fallen and risen again. De Rossi, however, prefers to interpret this scene more simply, as an emblem of faith. He observes that at the same time that our Blessed Lord foretold the shameful fall of Peter, he also gave an indication of his future firmness and indefectibility in the faith. "Jesus said, I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not; and thou being once converted, confirm thy brethren."[1] On the sarcophagi St. Peter and the cock are almost always followed by St. Peter's apprehension and imprisonment by the Jews, and by Moses (or Peter) striking the mystical rock. Thus his weakness is brought into immediate juxtaposition with the strength of his faith in confessing Christ boldly



FIGS. 66, 67.—*Denial of our Lord by St. Peter, and the Gathering of Manna, on opposite sides of the same arcosolium in Catacomb of St. Cyriaca.*

before men, and with the immovable firmness of that Rock whence flows the stream of evangelical doctrine and the grace of the Sacraments.

The scene painted on the other side of the vault, it is not quite so easy to identify. De Rossi, however, concludes without hesitation, that it represents the fall of manna from heaven for the support of the children of Israel in the wilderness. He says that towards the top of the painting there are clouds, above which he distinguishes a crown of palm-branches, and enclosing, probably, the sacred monogram. From this

The manna.

[1] St. Luke xxii. 32.

crown or circle there shoot forth a number of rays which reach the clouds, and from the clouds fall certain specks or flakes of a blue or greyish colour. Underneath, two men and two women, in travelling costume, hold out the folds of their garments to catch the falling flakes; and although this does not correspond with the letter of the historical narrative (which tells us that the manna covered the face of the earth like dew[1]), there is nothing strange in supposing the artist to have departed from the literal truth for the sake of selecting a position more suited to his purpose.

Introduction of the deceased to the heavenly banquet.

There yet remains another scene of this series, which requires to be explained. On the outer wall of the *arcosolium* is the figure of a lady (see Fig. 65) dressed in the same way as the virgins of the parable, but in the position of an *orante*. On either side of her stands a young man clothed in a short tunic, ornamented with *calliculæ* and stripes of purple from the shoulders to the breast; and these men are drawing aside two rich curtains with the evident purpose of giving admission to the lady who is between them. This can be nothing else but the heavenly banquet, the final and everlasting reward of the blessed; the marriage-feast, to which the wise virgins were admitted, who by faith and vigilance had kept their lamps trimmed, and by a frequent participation in "the living bread which came down from heaven," had rendered themselves worthy of receiving the promises of Christ, that He "would raise them up in the last day."[2]

Thus, this series of paintings is hardly less interesting or less complete, as a lesson of instruction, than the more famous series, to which we have so frequently to refer, in the sacramental chapels. They are in a different style of art, and manifestly of later date; but they seem to have been selected with the same care, and designed to set forth the same Divine truths. And although we do not know of any other place in the Catacombs in which they are all brought

[1] Exod. xvi. 14. [2] St. John vi. 51, 55.

together with the same fulness of detail and symmetry of arrangement, other examples may be found of each part of them separately, or one or two parts united, either in precisely the same form, or with such slight variation as in no way to interfere with the interpretation we have given of them. Thus, in the only other representation of the parable of the virgins with which we are acquainted, and which may be seen in the Catacomb which goes by the name of St. Agnes, five virgins stand on one side of the central figure, and the heavenly banquet appears on the other side.

In the Cemetery of Domitilla, in the gallery at the back of the apse of the Basilica of Petronilla, we have a scene corresponding to the introduction of this unknown virgin to the heavenly banquet. Only in this later painting (which however was certainly executed before the fifth century) Paradise is symbolised, not by a feast, but by flowers; faith too is symbolised, not by the history of St. Peter, but by the Holy Scriptures, which lie in a small chest of volumes at the feet of the deceased, who is represented as already introduced into heaven by one whose name is added, as well as the name of the deceased herself. The deceased was a matron named Veneranda, who is clothed in a full dalmatic, and has a veil on her head, the extremities of which are adorned with a fringe and purple *calliculæ*, very like the veil of Dionysas and her companions in Plate XIV. The name of her patroness is Petronilla, near whose sepulchre she is buried; thus setting before us in a visible form the same doctrine and practice which we find commended by a great Bishop and preacher of about the same age, viz., that whereas "we ought to venerate with great devotion all the martyrs, yet those have a special claim upon us whose relics we have; between whom and ourselves there is a certain relationship of familiarity; when we leave the body, they receive us."[1] The same doctrine and practice are contained also in the language which the Church still uses in her solemn office of burial, calling

Martyrs or other Saints welcoming the deceased to heaven.

Magi with monogram for star.

[1] St. Maxim. Tur. Hom. lxxxi. p. 623, ed. 1784.

FIG. 68.—*Fresco on Wall behind the Basilica of SS. Nereus and Achilleus.*

upon the angels and martyrs to receive the departed soul, and "lead her into Paradise."

We have given so full a description of these paintings from the Cemetery of Cyriaca, that our readers will almost have lost sight of the point which they were first introduced to illustrate. We quoted them as one of the earliest examples we know of the Christian use of the nimbus, which we assign to the middle of the fourth century. But we cannot even yet take our leave of it till we have called attention to another of its details, which brings before us another feature of Christian art, which is characteristic of the fourth century. On the right-hand side of the outer surface of the arch there is a man clad in a short tunic, with a cloak fastened on the right shoulder, and a Phrygian cap on his head, in whom every archæologist will at once recognise one of the three wise men; and he is pointing to an object in the clouds, which we naturally expect to be the star, instead of which it is the monogram, enclosed within a circle. This is remarkable, not only as a signal proof of the symbolical, in opposition to the merely historical character of these paintings; but it also shows that this mystical interpretation extends further than we might have expected; further than we have seen in any of the examples hitherto adduced. Not only are the Old Testament histories types and figures of Christ and His Church; not only are the facts of the New Testament secret symbols of evangelical and apostolical doctrines; but (as we now learn) they were understood by the early Christians as also containing allusions to historical events recorded in ecclesiastical Annals. For here, under the veil of the history of the wise men who were led by a star, there is a manifest allusion to the vision of the monogram which appeared in the heavens to Constantine. No one can fail to recognise the appropriateness of the allusion, of the substitution of the name of Christ for the star; since Jesus Christ was Himself the Star foretold by the prophets, whose salutary light was sent to enlighten "the

Gospel facts treated as prophetic types of events in the history of the Church.

Bullettino, 1863, 79.

people that walked in darkness," and who "dwelt in the region of the shadow of death."[1] Hence we find in other monuments also, *e.g.*, in some of the sarcophagi in the south of France, the star represented in the form of a cross, more or less resembling the monogram. But this painting from the Catacomb of Cyriaca is, as far as we know, the earliest example of it.

Nimbus in a painting in San Callisto.

Area xii. A. 9.

We come at last to the representation of the nimbus in the Catacomb of Callixtus which was so long since promised. It is to be seen at the back of the arched recess of an *arcosolium*. The central figure is seated, with face turned, and hand outstretched towards a man standing on the right, and he too has

Fig. 69.—*Arcosolium in Liberian region of St. Callixtus.*

his arm extended as if in the act of speaking. Behind the central figure stands another, inclining towards him; and on the ground, at each side, is a chest full of volumes or scrolls.

This singular painting described, and a conjectural interpretation offered.

R.S., iii. 251.

At first, whilst the painting was very indistinct, De Rossi thought he had before him one of the common representations of our Blessed Lady and the Divine Infant between two of the Magi; but when it had been carefully washed, it was clear that there was no trace of the Child, neither was the dress of the two men Oriental. Some persons still thought the central figure was of a woman, and conjectured that the scene repre-

[1] Isaias ix. 2. St. Matt. iv. 14–16. St. Luke i. 78, 79.

sented might be the Annunciation, with the angel in front and one of the prophets behind. De Rossi, however, considers it certain that the sitting figure, distinguished by the nimbus, is meant for our Lord, and bearing in mind the painting which we just now described from the Catacomb of St. Cyriaca, he was disposed to see in it a representation of Christ judging, or rather accepting the soul brought before Him, whilst the figure behind might be one of the holy martyrs, of whom the ancient Christians believed that they "fulfilled the office of advocates with God and Christ."[1]

But, on further consideration, it is clear that the man who stands in front is not praying, but speaking familiarly, or haranguing. Is he also then another advocate, and are the two praying figures, who are painted on the sides of the *arcosolium*, the deceased persons for whom both are pleading? But if so, we cannot understand the partial attitude of the Saviour; neither has the artist given any hint of a relation between the figure of Christ and those of the *oranti*. Baffled, therefore, in this attempt at an interpretation, De Rossi next turned his attention to the two chests of volumes on the ground. Objects of this kind in the paintings of the Catacombs usually denote the Holy Scriptures. Was it intended here to represent the Old and New Testaments respectively, and are the two figures a prophet and an apostle? the one standing behind Christ, as having foretold His coming, now obliterated as it were by His presence, whilst Christ turns towards the other, as being in so much more intimate relations with him, having lived and conversed with Him, and the Gospels containing the very record of His life? This is not the usual way in which our Lord is represented among His Apostles or Evangelists; and De Rossi hesitates, therefore, before the novelty of the scene and of its interpretation. He is unable however to suggest any other more probable interpretation, and he commends the subject to the further

[1] See Vol. I. p. 370.

study of the learned, only adding that its poverty of style as well as its ornaments assign it to a late period of the fourth century.

R.S., iii. 251.

There is nothing very remarkable in the other decorations of this *arcosolium*. The front of its lowest part, *i.e.*, the front of what may more strictly be called the grave, is covered with a representation of trellis-work. In the centre of the vault, above the grave, is a large bust, apparently of our Lord; the head, rather of a conventional type and approximating to what was afterwards called the Byzantine style, is surrounded with a nimbus; and at the two ends are women in prayer. These are clad in ash-coloured dalmatics, striped with black, and wear an ample veil over the head, which falls down behind their backs, and is ornamented towards the extremities with *calliculæ*. One of these ladies stands near a tree, and at her feet lies an open book, its two pages covered with words written in a running hand, which it is unfortunately impossible to decipher.

The *orante* the only primitive symbol retained here.

This figure of the *orante* is almost the only really primitive symbol which maintains its place among the decorations of this area. Even the typical figures or events of the patriarchal or Jewish dispensations, which foreshadowed the doctrines and Sacraments of the new law, are rarely represented here. It is doubtful whether there is a single representation of the Good Shepherd; there is one stiff figure of Moses striking the rock, and one of Adam and Eve after the Fall; but, for the most part, the ornamentation consists of nothing more than bands or squares of colour, large roses, festoons of fruit or flowers, and (in one instance) a large bird with outstretched wings.

Peculiar ornamentation of some tombs in St. Soteris'. *R.S.*, iii. 80.

Of two or three of the *arcosolia*, the style of ornamentation is very peculiar. The ground is all red; and upon this the figures are traced in black and white, making them (says De Rossi) look like ghosts moving amid an atmosphere of fire. This singular effect is very appropriate in the representation

of the Three Children in the fiery furnace, which has been treated in this way; and especially in the shadowy outline (in white) which is here added, of a fourth figure—Him whom Nabuchodonosor saw "walking in the midst of the fire," and whose form, he said, "was like the Son of God," but of whom the inspired writer tells us that he was "the Angel of the Lord."[1] This is a very unusual addition to the ancient paintings of this history; but there is another example in a painting of the Catacomb of St. Hermes, and it occurs also in the sculpture of some sarcophagi. Other subjects which completed the decoration of this *arcosolium* were the resurrection of

The Three Children, accompanied by the Angel of the Lord.

FIG. 70.—*The Three Children in the Fiery Furnace, and the Angel of the Lord.*

Lazarus (with the very unusual addition of two of the Apostles accompanying our Lord), Jonas, and (apparently) the occupant of the grave, of whom we learn from the Greek inscription, painted in white on the red ground, that she was one of the faithful, named Margaret, the only child of Asterius.

ΜΑΡΓΑΡΙC Η ΠΙCΤΗ ΜΟΝΟΓΕΝΗC ΑCΤєΡΙΟΥ.[2]

The only chamber of the area which is painted throughout has its ceiling coloured in monochrome (dark blue), a mode of decoration of which there is no other example in the whole

[1] Daniel iii. 49, 92.

[2] The small letters are conjectural emendations by De Rossi.

cemetery; and its walls are scored by red and dark bands and squares on a white ground. On the outside, over the doorway, there are three squares, of which the centre is occupied by two sheep, and those on either side by two birds, with some bush or plant between them. The plant between the two sheep is of a very peculiar kind, consisting of a very short stem, only just rising above the animals' heads, and then shooting out thick branches horizontally. At first sight, it suggests the same idea as we have already seen in Fig. 51,[1] a disguised cross. Indeed, it can hardly be said to be disguised, and perhaps the artist intended to represent the faithful gathered in this life around the standard of the cross, and dwelling under the shadow of its protection; whilst in the birds on either side he exhibits the same souls released from the bonds of the flesh, and entered into the enjoyment of everlasting bliss in the garden of Paradise, near the mystical tree of life.[2] If this were so, it would be an interesting example of the steady continuance, from age to age, of one of the earliest elements of the symbolism of Christian art; for this is the sense in which we interpreted the sheep and birds which we found placed opposite to one another in the crypts of Lucina.[3] We should hardly have suggested such an interpretation of so late a painting as this, had not the painting been manifestly superior to all the other decorations of the Liberian area, better in design, and executed on better material. It was clearly the work of another hand—one might almost say of another school of art: such, at least, is the judgment of De Rossi; and it is quite possible that the artist may have been one whose taste led him to cling to the traditions of his predecessors at a time when they were generally forsaken.

Ornaments by various patterns in different colours.

It is not worth while to give specimens of the ordinary patterns of red bands and squares on a white ground, which formed the most common decoration of the tombs in this area. We make one exception only in favour of the pattern

[1] See page 165. [2] Apocalypse xxii. 2. [3] See pp. 53, 54.

of floriated Greek crosses (yellow on a white ground) which decorated the roof of the chamber in which Redemptus and other deacons were buried.[1] This partiality for the form of the cross is very characteristic of the age to which the chapel belongs. We must not conclude, however, that it was altogether peculiar to the age, nor even that it was any necessary token of a profession of the Christian faith. Something of the same kind may be seen in the tessellated pavements and other

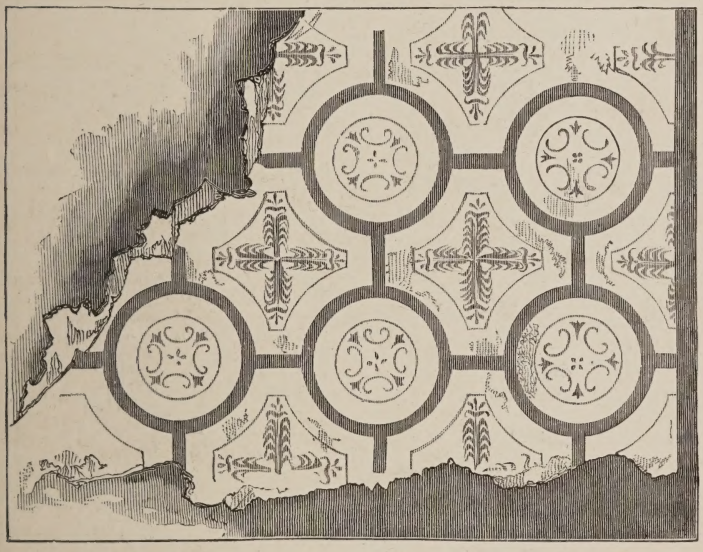


FIG. 71.—*Specimen of Ceiling with floriated Crosses.*

ornamental work of various buildings, both public and private, belonging to the Imperial period. And in Christian paintings of this date the cross, as we have already seen, was no longer disguised, but rather raised aloft as the *Labarum*, the standard of an army, and a pledge and record of victory.

Indeed, the dominant idea of this period of Christian art is one of triumph, the expansion and victorious progress of the one true faith, whereas the characteristic of the preceding ages

[1] See Vol. I., pp. 164, 368.

had been rather of peace amid combats, joy amid trials, safety in the midst of dangers. In the earlier ages, the Christian suffered, prayed, and was often delivered; now he reigns triumphant, and begins to assume the outward emblems of victory. We have seen this in the use of the nimbus and the exaltation of

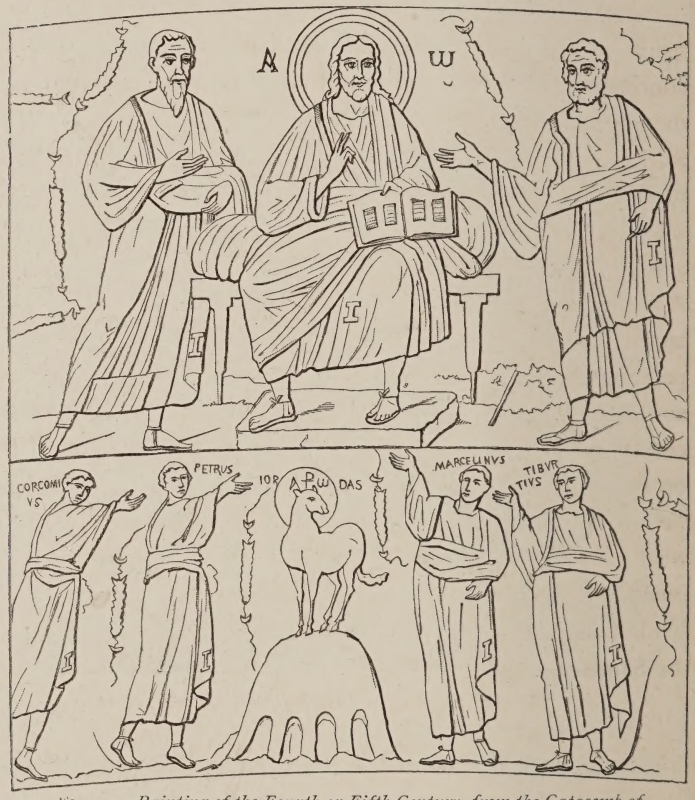


FIG. 72.—*Painting of the Fourth or Fifth Century, from the Catacomb of SS. Peter and Marcellinus.*

the cross. It is apparent also in the representations of Christ, who now stands upon a mountain, the mountain whence He ascended into heaven, "leading captivity captive;" or Mount Sion, which is the Church; that mountain which Daniel saw in vision "filling up the whole earth."[1] And four rivers burst

Christ sitting on a mountain.

[1] Daniel ii. 35.

forth from the side of this mountain, like the four rivers of Paradise, the waters of Divine grace and truth, opened by the four Evangelists and the Apostles, "whose sound hath gone forth into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the whole world."[1] Christ Himself is no longer represented under the generic symbol of a shepherd, but as a separate figure, or surrounded by a certain cortége of honour, evidently conceived with a view to His personal glorification. Hence the Saints participate with Christ in His glory, more especially St. Peter and St. Paul, as the chief of the Apostles, and representing the whole Church, both Jews and Gentiles. We shall see this very clearly expressed in one of the gilded glasses which belongs to this century, in which the two Apostles, and the very names of Jerusalem and Bethlehem, appear in this sense. In the Catacomb of Pretextatus, a painting of about the same date gives us *Petrus* and *Paulus* and *Sustus*, or Sixtus, the Pope who had been martyred in this cemetery. They are all without the nimbus, as they are also on the glass which has been mentioned. In the figure which we have given on the opposite page, but which is of a somewhat later date (from the Catacomb of SS. Peter and Marcellinus), the heads of our Lord and of the lamb, which is His symbol, are surrounded with the nimbus, but not so any of the Saints who are in His company.

Bullettino, 1867, 59, 86 1872, 63.

[1] Romans x. 18.

CHAPTER IV.

THE FIFTH AND FOLLOWING CENTURIES.

Paintings in the Catacombs in the fifth and sixth centuries extremely rare—An example or two given—A specimen of the seventh century from Cemetery of Generosa—And of the ninth from San Callisto—Portraits of our Blessed Lord—Conclusion.

Very few paintings in the Catacombs of the fifth or sixth centuries.

THE end of the fourth century brings us within a very few years of the close of the Catacombs as the ordinary burial-place of the Roman Christians; and even had it been otherwise, the social and political condition of the city after its capture by Alaric would have forbidden us to hope for any successful cultivation of the fine arts during the succeeding years. It is probable that very few paintings indeed were executed in the Catacombs in the fifth and sixth centuries; certainly none that deserve detailed examination, whether for choice of subject or style of execution.

The latest painting which De Rossi has found in the Cemetery of Callixtus, that was executed contemporaneously with the original excavation, belongs either to the very end of the fourth, or beginning of the fifth century; and although two-thirds of it have perished, it is still possible to recognise the subjects, and to see in the largest of the fragments which remain, unequivocal tokens of an approximation to what we are accustomed to call the Byzantine style. These may be seen in the almost geometrical precision of the arrangement of the hair on our Lord's head (which however is without a nimbus), as He stands before two baskets of bread, stretching forth towards them the rod of His power; and again, as He

R.S., iii. 77, 84.

touches the corpse of Lazarus with the same rod. The painting on the other side, of the multiplication of the loaves and fishes, was evidently the sacrifice of Isaac, though nothing now remains of it but the uplifted knife in the hand of Abraham. These paintings ornament an *arcosolium;* and in their combination they present a dogmatic synthesis of the very same doctrines that we have found so often repeated, the sacrifice of Christ (whether on Mount Calvary or in the Mass), the Eucharistic Bread, and the Resurrection. They still retain a remembrance of the ancient symbolism; but this is the last

FIG. 73.—*Resurrection of Lazarus—beginning of fifth century.*

time that we shall meet with it. Both the taste for this kind of ornament and the knowledge of its meaning was rapidly declining, and the use of paintings of a more plain and positive character came into fashion even in the fourth century, and still more exclusively in the fifth.

A letter addressed by Olympiodorus to St. Nilus, disciple of St. Chrysostom,[1] tells us that the walls of the Basilicas in the fifth century were covered with representations of different animals, and of scenes taken from fishing and the chase. And

Bullettino, 1878, 152.

[1] Act. Conc. Nicæn. Labbe. tom. viii. 875.

the Saint having been asked his opinion upon this practice, severely censures such childish and unmeaning decorations as substitutes for the older and better fashion of depicting scenes from the Old and New Testaments.

FIG. 74.—*Three Saints painted in Shaft of the Crypt of St. Cecilia, in fifth century.*

The only other paintings in the Catacombs which we find attributed by De Rossi to the fifth century are of the plainest and most literal kind. There are some tokens of a second series of decorations of the Papal crypt, which may have been the work

of Pope Sixtus III.;[1] but the only part of it which can now be recognised is a very large Constantinian monogram in the arch of the doorway. And in the shaft which gave light and air to the adjoining crypt of St. Cecilia, appear the figures of three saints with their names over their heads, and a palm (or, according to Garrucci, three palms) by their side, to denote the fact of their martyrdom; and we have seen the reasons which probably led to their being represented at this time and in this place.[2] Higher up in the same shaft is a plain

FIG. 75.—*Fresco of St. Cecilia on the Wall of her Crypt.*

Latin Cross between two sheep; and above that again, a woman (perhaps St. Cecilia) in prayer. On the wall of the crypt, and close to the tomb of the Saint, there is another painting of her, but this is of a much later date. At the time that the figures of the Saints were executed in the *luminare*, the tomb of St. Cecilia was ornamented with mosaic work, the pattern of which can no longer be recognised.

[1] See Part I. p. 393.

[2] See Part I. p. 332.

It does not, however, enter into the plan of this work to write the history of Christian art from its beginning down to the final abandonment of the Catacombs in the ninth and tenth centuries. We have traced it as fully as we can during the period that they were in use for purposes of burial; but we cannot pursue the subject with the same minuteness of detail through four or five succeeding centuries, during which they were frequented only from motives of devotion. It has been already mentioned that certain historical crypts (crypts, that is, in which famous martyrs were buried) continually received new decorations, according as the devotion of succeeding Popes or the ravages of time invited or necessitated this work of restoration. But of these we can only notice three or four; chiefly those to which reference has been made in earlier portions of this work.

A painting of the seventh century from the Catacomb of Generosa.

The most ancient specimen of these later decorations is that which was given in our first volume from the Cemetery of Generosa, and seems to have been executed in the seventh century, about the time when the bodies of the Saints which it commemorates were translated into Rome. In it Christ stands between four Saints. His right hand is raised in the act of giving His blessing according to the Greek form of benediction; the thumb and forefinger united, and the second and third fingers extended; and in His left hand He holds a book (of the Gospels) studded with gems.

He is clad in the tunic and *pallium*, and the cruciform nimbus appears at the back of His head. The nimbus behind the heads of the four Saints is quite plain; and they are clothed in the ancient style, in white tunics, ornamented with stripes of purple and pale gold, and even this gold has purple *calliculæ* upon it. The dress of one of the men is more highly ornamented than that of the others; and that of the lady is richer still. She has rings in her ears and jewels among her hair; the borders of her gold dalmatic, both round the neck, the wrists, and towards the feet, are broad stripes of purple,

Bullettino, 1869, 29.

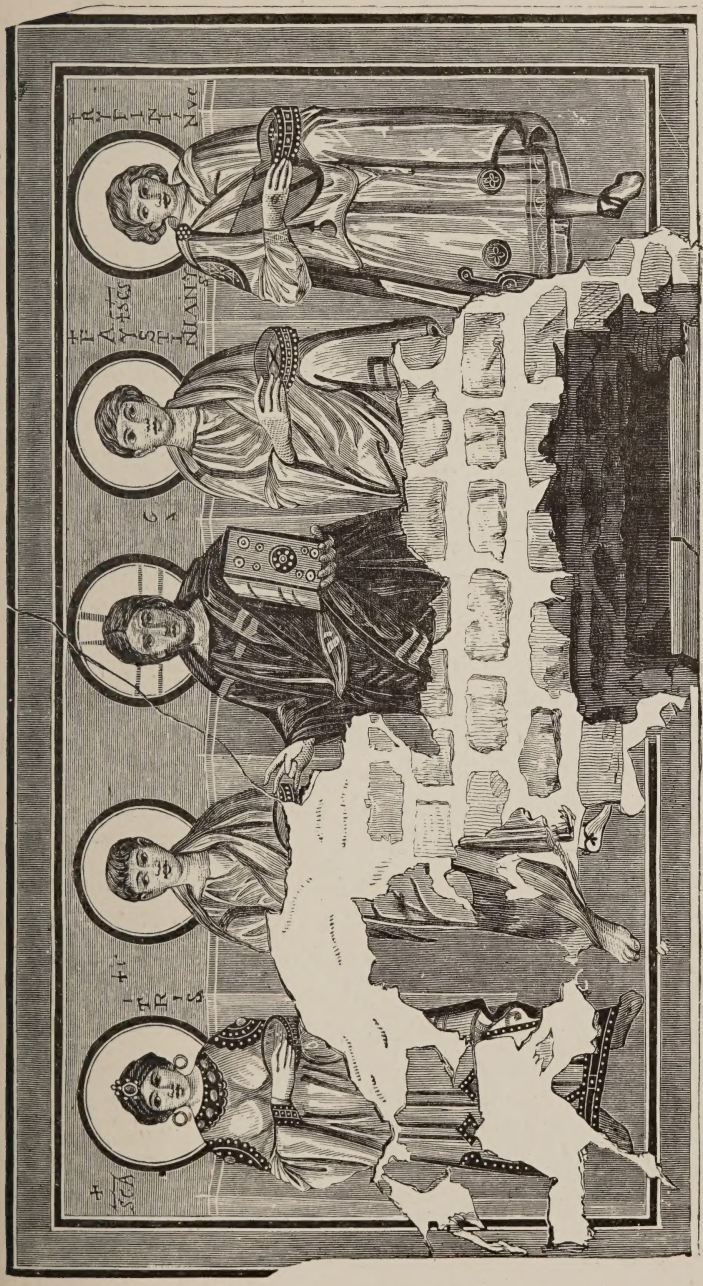


FIG. 76.—*Fresco in Cubiculum behind the Basilica at the Cemetery of Generosa.*

powdered with rubies and pearls, and a very large and handsome brooch of the same kind is fastened on each shoulder.

Of the eighth century we do not know any specimens of painting that can be seen in the Catacombs. Some were discovered in 1702 on the walls of a buried church near the Tor di Specchi within the city, but they have been long since lost sight of again. According to the report of one who saw them at the time of their discovery, they consisted of a crucifixion, and of many figures of Saints, amongst which was the figure of Paul I. with the square nimbus, showing that he was still alive, and with the legend, *Sanctiss. Paulus Romanus Papa;* and on the side walls were scenes from the life of our Lord, manifestly painted over older and better pictures.

Bullettino, 1868, 16.

A painting of the ninth century from the tomb of St. Cornelius.

This same legend of *Papa Romanus*, or its equivalent PP ROM or PP R, is what we find also on the paintings of St. Cornelius and of St. Sixtus, executed in the very first years of the ninth century near the tomb of the first-mentioned Pope. A chromo-lithograph of the figures of St. Cornelius and St. Cyprian has been given in Plate XI. of our first volume, and a slight sketch of that of St. Sixtus may be seen in Plate X. We here give another sketch of St. Sixtus and his companion—probably St. Optatus[1]—on a larger scale, showing the legend from Holy Scripture which runs round the framework of the picture—a practice of which this is, as far as we know, the earliest example. It has been already pointed out that the words are taken from the old version of Psalm lviii., verse 17; *Ego autem cantabo virtutem Tuam et exaltabo misericordiam Tuam quia factus es et susceptor meus*, "I will sing of Thy strength and extol Thy mercy, for Thou art become my support;" and that they might most appropriately have expressed the personal experience of Pope Leo III., of whom it is recorded in the *Liber Pontificalis* that he did certain works of restoration in this cemetery and to whom we therefore attribute this painting.

R.S., i. 299.

[1] See Part I. p. 361.

FIG. 77.—*Paintings of St. Sixtus and another Bishop near the Tomb of St. Cornelius (probably of the ninth century).*

Others in the Catacomb of Pontianus.

The paintings of SS. Abdon and Sennen in the Catacomb of Pontianus, between the Porta Portese and the Porta di San Pancrazio, belong to a somewhat later date, and there are others of a similar kind in a Catacomb at Albano. We give here the bust of our Lord from the Roman Catacomb for the sake of the inscription below it, which records at whose expense the painting was made—a circumstance we do not remember

Bullettino, 1869, 72.

Fig. 78.—*Bust of our Lord in the Catacomb of Pontianus, of the Ninth Century.*

to have met with at any earlier date. "Gaudiosus made it," or caused it to be made, "out of the gifts of God," *i.e.*, out of the means with which God had blessed him.

Bullettino, 1878, 160.

The phrase *de donis Dei* occurs in the prayer of oblation in the most ancient Liturgies and is still retained there (*de Tuis donis ac datis offerimus Tibi hæc dona*, &c.); but it is in truth more ancient than Christianity itself; for we find the idea fully developed in a hymn of Philo Judæus, which runs as

follows; "We offer the first fruits of the earth to Thee Who art Thyself the Author of the benefit, if indeed he can rightly be said to offer who himself receives; for these all are Thy gifts and presents."[1] When offerings were made in honour of the Saints, their names were often coupled with that of God as the authors or givers of the temporal goods out of which the offering was made (*de donis Dei et Sanctorum*). And so over the heads of four Saints (two of whom were Abdon and Sennen) painted on this same wall, the legend runs, "DE DONIS DI ET SCRUM ABDON . . ." It seems tolerably certain that the names of the Saints were coupled with that of God in the same way in the Albano painting, though too many of the words have perished to allow us to say so with confidence.

Many of our readers will be familiar with the form of legend used in the paintings in the lately-recovered subterranean Church of St. Clement.

EGO BENO DE RAPIZA CU MARIA UXORE MEA P. AMORE DI ET BEATI CLEMENTIS P. G. R. F. C.[2]

"I, Beno de Rapiza, with Mary my wife, for the love of God and of Blessed Clement, have caused this to be made for a favour received."

And

EGO MARIA MACELLARIA P. TIMORE DEI ET REMEDIO ANIME MEE HEC P. G. R F. C.

"I, Mary the victualler's wife, for the fear of God and for the healing of my own soul, have caused this to be made for a favour received."

Portraits of Christ.

The picture of our Lord which we have just given from the Catacomb of Pontianus suggests to us that we ought to say a few words, before we take our leave of the paintings in the Catacombs, on the subject of these portraits of Christ. It

[1] Phil. Jud. *De Cophini festo*, &c., ed. Mai. 1818, p. 5. Compare 1 Paralip. xxix. 16: "O Lord, our God, all this store that we have prepared to build Thee a House for Thy holy Name is from Thy hand, and all things are Thine."

[2] Pro gratiâ receptâ fieri curavi.

will be obvious to all our readers that the more ancient frescoes which represent Him as the Good Shepherd, or in the act of performing some miracle, aimed only at reproducing the fact or the symbol which was needed to express the desired idea. There is no trace in them of any intention to give a portrait. The Gnostics had claimed to be in possession of such a portrait in very early times, a veritable likeness "made by order of Pilate, when Jesus lived among men;" but St. Irenæus[1] does not speak of these portraits with any respect; neither is there any evidence that the faithful claimed to be possessed of a similar treasure. On the contrary, St. Augustine says distinctly,[2] that "we picture to ourselves the likeness of our Blessed Lord as He appeared in the flesh, each one according to his own imagination; but yet, whatever that appearance was, it can only have been one." And he adds, "Neither do we know the face of the Virgin Mary, nor what were the features of Lazarus," &c. When, therefore, St. Basil writes to Julian,[3] that "He invokes the holy apostles, prophets, and martyrs, as intercessors with God, and honours and reverences the impressions of their likenesses, handed down to us from the holy apostles," we understand him to claim apostolic antiquity not for any particular portrait, but for the doctrine and practice of invoking the saints and venerating their images.

Written descriptions of our Lord's personal appearance.

Perhaps the oldest written description of our Lord's personal appearance is that which occurs in the letter addressed to the Iconoclast Emperor, Theophilus, in the ninth century—a letter which has sometimes been attributed to St. John Damascene, and printed in the Appendix to his works, but which is now generally acknowledged to have been the joint production of the patriarchs of Antioch, Alexandria, and Jerusalem, or at least to have been composed by one of those

[1] C. Hæres. lib. i. 25, 6.
[2] De Trinit. viii. 5. tom. viii. p. 1326, ed. Gaume.
[3] Epist. cclx. tom. iii. p. 674, ed. Gaume.

patriarchs and adopted by the others. In this letter it is asserted that Constantine caused a likeness of our Lord to be painted "according to the description which had been handed down by historians;" and this description contains the following details: that He was "tall in figure, with beautiful eyes, eyebrows meeting, a correct nose, curly hair, good fair complexion, and a dark beard." Nicephorus Callixtus, writing five centuries later, and professing in like manner to give the traditional portrait, agrees with this in many particulars. He speaks of His height, "His agreeable complexion, His golden hair, long, but not very thick, and slightly curling; dark, straight eyebrows, long nose, bright eyes, and face neither round nor sharp, but oval, and moderately ruddy." To these we may add the description given in the so-called letter of Lentulus to the Roman Senate, which says that He was "tall and well proportioned in stature; of a countenance full of force and gravity, such as moved spectators both to love and fear. His hair was auburn and glossy, and it flowed down upon His shoulders, curly, and parted in the middle, after the manner of the Nazarenes." The forehead is described as "smooth and very serene; the countenance without line or spot, of a pleasant colour; the general appearance open and pleasing; the nose and mouth faultless; the beard thick, of the same colour as the hair, and divided; eyes light in colour, and extremely bright."

Portrait of Christ in the Catacombs of third century.

Of course these descriptions are not produced here as having any claim to be considered authentic or contemporary portraits, but we have thought it worth while to quote them for the sake of setting by their side Kügler's account of a painting in the Catacombs which he supposed to be the most ancient portrait of Christ in existence, and which even De Rossi and other competent critics at the present day still assign to the third century. Of this portrait Kügler says, "The face is oval, with a straight nose, arched eyebrows, a smooth and rather high forehead, the expression serious and mild; the hair, parted on

the forehead, flows in long curls down the shoulders; the beard is not thick, but short and divided; the age between thirty and forty."

It cannot be denied that there is a strong general resemblance between this description of what Kügler actually saw, and that given on traditional hearsay by the ancient writers

FIG. 79.—*The earliest Portrait of Christ, from a Ceiling in Catacomb of Domitilla*
(Kügler's Schools of Painting in Italy, Part I. p. 15, ed. 1851)

whom we have quoted. Hence we are not at all surprised at the eagerness with which strangers visiting the Catacombs inquire after this portrait. For the most part, however, they seek it where it is not to be found, in the Cemetery of Callixtus. It really exists in the Cemetery of Domitilla, in the

same chamber in which there is the representation of Orpheus and his lyre. In its present condition, however, it is impossible to recognise the details mentioned by Kügler. It is a painting of great interest and importance, as being the only one of its kind that we are acquainted with, prior to the age of Constantine; it is, however, at present terribly defaced, and some of its distinctive features are almost obliterated.

FIG. 80.—*The same Portrait, as copied by Mr. Heaphy, and to be published in his forthcoming work on "The Antiquity of the Likeness of our Blessed Lord."*

We produce two copies of it, the one taken from Kügler's "History of Art," the other from an original drawing by the late Mr. Thomas Heaphy. We are indebted for this last to the kindness of Messrs. Hardwicke & Bogue, who are about to publish a very important work by the author we have just

named, on the authenticity of the ancient portraits of our Lord. There is something so striking and sacred about the face, as represented by Mr. Heaphy, that we are hardly surprised at an art-critic expressing his conviction that "it was painted by one who had himself seen Christ."[1] Nevertheless, a comparison of the two drawings will satisfy our readers that they cannot really be depended upon as faithful reproductions of the original. In our own careful examination of the fresco, we entirely failed to gain any clear view of the features; and the Count de St. Laurent, who spared no pains to make his work as perfect as possible, declares that in its present condition it is impossible to distinguish them.[2]

Another portrait in sculpture.

The only other ancient representation of our Blessed Lord that still exists, which deserves to be classed with this either in point of character or of antiquity, is in sculpture, not in painting. It is carved at the end of a sarcophagus of the fourth century, which stands in the Christian Museum at the Lateran. Our copy of it is taken from De Laurent's "Guide to Christian Art,"[3] which agrees with that given by another artist in Garrucci's "History of Christian Art." Nobody can have any doubt as to the subject here represented; it is the same as we have seen painted at a much earlier date in a *cubiculum* of the Cemetery of Pretextatus, the healing of the woman afflicted with the issue of blood, by touching the hem of our Lord's garment. The attitude of the figures, however, and the accessories of the representation, deserve careful attention. Our Lord is not here the young and beardless man ordinarily represented in the sculpture of sarcophagi. His features are of a very marked character, and remind us in many ways of the descriptions we have read by Nicephorus and others. But the grouping of the whole scene reminds us still more closely of the statue which Eusebius tells us[4] was set up by the grateful famous

[1] Mr. Wyke Bayliss, F.S.A., in his Witness of Art; or, The Legend of Beauty. 2d edition, p. 179.

[2] Guide de l'Art Chrétien, tom. ii. p. 236. [3] Vol. ii. pl. i.

[4] H. E. vii. 18. A woodcut of the front of this Sarcophagus will be given in Book IV.

Hæmorrhoissa herself at the doors of her house in Paneas (or Cæsarea Philippi) as an everlasting token of gratitude for the wonderful favour which she had received. He says that the

FIG. 81.—*Our Lord and the Hæmorrhoissa, on a Sarcophagus of the Fourth Century.*

group "was placed on a high pedestal, and that it consisted of the figure of the woman on her knees, with her hands stretched forward, like to a person petitioning for something; that, oppo-

site to this, there was the upright figure of a man wrought in the same material; that the man was clad in a cloak, gracefully thrown round him, and that he is stretching forth his hand towards the woman. At his feet there grows upon this pedestal a strange kind of herb, which, springing up as far as the hem of his bronze cloak, is a cure for all kinds of diseases. They say that this image represents the likeness of Jesus. And it has remained even to our own days, so that the people who dwell in that city have seen these things." Eusebius goes on to remark that it is not to be wondered at that persons from among the Gentiles, who were formerly benefited by our Saviour, should have done this, since he had himself known likenesses of the Apostles Peter and Paul, and of Christ Himself, painted in colours, to have been preserved to his own time, and that these were probably made because the ancients were accustomed to honour their benefactors in this way.

The agreement between the description by the historian and the figures on the sarcophagus is striking, and suggests the idea that the Roman artist designedly copied the Eastern original. The introduction of buildings instead of persons into the background of the scene may be mentioned as a circumstance which tends to corroborate this conjecture, for we do not pretend to offer it as anything more, though at the same time we think it may fairly claim to be more reasonable than the objections which have been raised against the authenticity of Eusebius' narrative.

Ivory medallion of Christ.

The gilded glasses found in the Catacombs never give any characteristic figure of Christ, such as could be mistaken for a personal portrait, but that which is carved on an ivory medallion preserved in the Christian Museum at the Vatican,[1] to which De Rossi is disposed to attribute very high antiquity, bears a certain resemblance to the face described by Kügler as represented in the fresco in the Cemetery of Domitilla; and it seems to have been followed more or less faithfully in the

[1] For this medallion see Book V., chap. 2, sect. 4, 5.

mosaics of Rome and Ravenna, and lasted even through the whole Byzantine period, until it finally received new life and beauty at the hands of Giotto and his disciples. Our readers have seen a specimen of the fifth century taken from the Cemetery of SS. Peter and Marcellinus. This figure is no longer a mere bust as in Domitilla, but He sits enthroned in glory between the two Apostles, Peter and Paul; and in the lower level He appears again as the mystical Lamb, also standing,

FIG. 82.—*Fresco of Bust of our Lord in the Crypt of St. Cecilia.*

crowned with the nimbus, on the mountain whence flows in four streams the river Jordan, and associated with Him in glory are SS. Peter and Marcellinus, Gorgonius and Tiburtius.

We have seen also, in the first Part of our work, another painting from the Crypt of St. Cecilia, which De Rossi attributes to Pope Paschal, in the beginning of the ninth century; at least he is confident that it is not earlier. And to this we may add another from the Cemetery of Pontianus of a yet later date, and a third from the Catacombs of Naples. But in these

F.S., ii. 123, 360.

it was sought to give grandness and solemnity to the figure by colossal size rather than by force of expression, and the result is far from being satisfactory.

After what has been said, it is hardly necessary to add that we cannot at all agree with those writers who assert that "the evidence is overwhelming that the early Christians were not less careful to treasure the likeness of the Master than were

FIG. 83.—*Bust of Christ, from Catacomb of Pontianus. Bosio, p.* 299.

the Romans to keep the likeness of the Cæsar to whom He rendered tribute." [1]

No portraits of our Blessed Lady, nor of the Apostles, excepting SS. Peter and Paul.

If there are no genuine portraits of our Blessed Lord in the Catacombs, still less will our readers expect to find any

[1] The Witness of Art, by Wyke Bayliss, F.S.A., p. 179. Doubtless, the evidence referred to will be found in the work so long announced, but not yet published, on "The Antiquity of the Likeness of our Blessed Lord," by the late Thomas Heaphy, to be edited by Wyke Bayliss.

uniform representation of His holy Mother or His Apostles. Raoul Rochette, indeed, has said very positively[1] that there was no consecrated model in the first ages of the Church for the figures of any of these sacred objects of Christian devotion and worship. More recent discoveries and careful study of all existing monuments obliges us, as we shall presently see, to

FIG. 84.—*Bust of Christ, from the Neapolitan Catacombs.*

modify this statement with reference to the two Princes of the Apostles. It would have been strange if their disciples had not taken advantage of their long residence in Rome to possess themselves of authentic likenesses of men to whom they owed so much; but there had been no such opportunity with

[1] Tableau des Catacombes, p. 164.

reference to Christ and His Blessed Mother. We have already seen two of the earliest representations which the Catacombs give us of the Blessed Virgin; and we here set them before our readers again in a form which admits of their being easily compared. The first is from the Catacomb of Priscilla, and cannot be assigned to any later period than the first half of the second century; the other is only an enlarged reproduction of the central figure which may be seen with two Magi on either side of her, in page 170.

FIG. 85.—*The B. Virgin and Isaias, from Cemetery of Priscilla.*

In the Catacomb on the Via Nomentana, which goes by the name of St. Agnes, our Blessed Lady is painted in the lunette of an *arcosolium* with her arms outstretched in prayer, and the Divine Infant in front of her, quite unsupported. The monogram is on either side, and from both sides it is made to turn towards the centre. This sign is sometimes found in later paintings on the figures of saints, and may be understood to signify that they live in Christ; but more commonly it is

reserved to indicate the name and person of our Blessed Lord. Its presence here naturally directs our thoughts to the fourth century as the probable date of the work; but as there is no

FIG. 86.—*The Blessed Virgin and Child, in Cemetery of Domitilla, of third century.*

FIG. 87.—*The Blessed Virgin and Child in the (so-called) Cemetery of St. Agnes, of the age of Constantine.*

nimbus round the head either of Christ or of His holy Mother, it is necessary to fix the earlier half of that century rather than

the later; and De Rossi assigns it to the age of Constantine. The stamp of the ancient Greco-Roman artistic genius is not to be seen here; neither, on the other hand, does it exhibit the characteristics of the Byzantine style. Its chief interest, perhaps, consists in the fact that the position of the Holy Child with reference to the Mother, which we see here for the first time, is one which has always been held in special favour in the Greek Church. It is to be seen on the seals of upwards of thirty convents on Mount Athos, all dedicated to the Blessed Virgin; and remains to the present day a favourite Russian type of the Madonna, which they call *Zuámenskaia.*[1]

But this is a subject we need not pursue any further. We have already reached the utmost limits of time during which there was any *cultus* or frequentation of the Roman Catacombs; and it is in churches within the city, such as that of St. Clement, or in the illuminated MSS. of the old monasteries, that materials must be looked for to carry on the history of Christian Art through the few intervening centuries to the days of the Renaissance.[2]

These do not belong to our subject, and we must therefore now conclude this chronological arrangement of the paintings of the Catacombs, which, however imperfect it may be, is certainly more full and complete than any that has ever been made before. Indeed it would be more correct to say that this is the first time that the attempt has been made to draw up such a list at all. No doubt dates have often been assigned to particular paintings before, but not on any sound scientific principles, and the results were therefore most vague and often contradictory. Sarcophagi, for instance, were attributed to the second and third centuries by Settele and others, which we now know with certainty to have been long posterior

[1] See Didron, Histoire de Dieu, 267, fig. 73; Palmer's Christian Symbolism, p. 66.

[2] Part of this history will be found in M. Allard's new work, *L'Art Paien sous les Empereurs Chrétiens.* See Note E in Appendix.

to Constantine, whilst, contrariwise, Father Marchi, though his general tendency was to err in the opposite direction, yet believed that certain ornamentations in stucco, which are to be seen in some of the subterranean chapels, were executed when the age of persecution was ended, whereas they belong rather to an age when interference with the burial-places of the Christian dead had not yet been apprehended.

Development of Christian Art continuous.

It has been already explained that the present arrangement is based in the main on the dates of the excavation of the several chambers or galleries in which the paintings occur, and that these dates are ascertained by a multitude of arguments from history, epigraphy, and an accurate comparative analysis of every part of the Catacombs. But the attentive reader cannot fail to have noticed how natural and probable a history of the development of Christian art has been thereby unconsciously, as it were, described. In the technical execution of the work, we have marked a steady continual decline from the first. The oldest paintings are indisputably the best. In their religious character, on the contrary, considered as compositions having a distinct Christian meaning, there was at first a continual sensible progress. In the most ancient paintings the general arrangement and the greater part of the ornamentation was Pagan; the central subject alone was Christian. As time went on, the unmeaning prettinesses of Pagan art were eliminated, and Christian symbols introduced in their stead. But the earliest cycle of Christian symbolism had reached its apogee, and was already declining before the latter half of the third century, the very period to which some of the best critics are wont to assign the decadence of art generally.[1]

Certainly after this date scarcely any new ideas were introduced, and Christian art was manifestly more hampered than before. At first there had been almost unlimited freedom in the choice of subjects; even scenes from the life of our

[1] Winckelmann, *Histoire de l'Art*, tom. ii. p. 488 (Paris, 1793); D'Agincourt, *Hist. de l'Art par les Mon.*, tom. iii. p. 50.

Blessed Lord were represented; but by and by the necessity of cautious reserve was felt, and such representations dropped into disuse. Where there was danger of intrusion from the Pagan world without, nothing specially sacred was depicted. Birds, fruits, and flowers, and even figures from Pagan mythology, provided they were not really idolatrous (such as the fable of Psyche, for example), were used in preference to subjects more distinctively Christian. Biblical subjects continued to retain their place in the decoration of interior chambers, but in a more literal and historical form, and without any of those symbolical adjuncts which expressed so graphically Christian dogmas. These were seen in perfection in the sacramental chambers of San Callisto, which are as superior in their symbolism to the paintings in the sepulchre of the Flavii in the Catacomb of Domitilla, as they are inferior to them in all that concerns technical skill in beauty of design and correctness of execution.

R.S., i. 99, 196.

Bullettino, 1865, 58.

And we believe that generally throughout all the Catacombs, with a few possible exceptions perhaps, the mere artist would, by the history of his art, arrive at the same conclusion as to the chronological succession of the paintings as De Rossi has done on purely historical or topographical grounds, founded on an almost microscopic examination of every accessible corner of subterranean Rome. It is a very strong but wholly unforeseen confirmation of his judgment, to find that the successive variations of subject or style, which are thus attributed to the works of art of different periods, correspond both to the outward condition of the Church and to the natural progress of the mind, so that they might almost have been anticipated by one who was thoroughly familiar with all the Christian writings of the same periods. The historical sketch has not been suggested by any such anticipations, neither has it in any way been controlled by them; yet it has been possible, almost throughout the entire sketch, so aptly to illustrate the paintings by the writings, that they must needs have seemed to all unprejudiced

persons a true reflection of the same outward circumstances, a faithful echo of the same doctrinal teaching and tradition.

Finally, it should be observed that each of the phases which Christian art went through, during the period that the Catacombs remained in use, was derived from its predecessor by a natural sequence of ideas. The roots of the later phase are, in every instance, buried in the earlier; and the earlier phase is still in process of dissolution, whilst the later is already germinating. Hence they are not separated from one another by strict chronological boundaries which are never transgressed.

It is easy to assign positive dates to specific facts; but ideas are subject in their growth and decay to the influence of local or other accidental circumstances which it is often difficult to trace. Although, therefore, we have perfect confidence in the general accuracy of the chronological sketch which has been here given, and although we believe that the characteristics of each successive period have been marked with sufficient distinctness to enable intelligent observers to determine, at least approximately, the age of any particular specimen of painting that may be brought before them from the Catacombs, yet we are far from saying that there is never any room for doubt and hesitation.

BOOK IV.

EARLY CHRISTIAN SCULPTURE.

CHAPTER I.

CHRISTIAN SARCOPHAGI.

Christian sculpture almost confined to sarcophagi—Christians used sarcophagi in Apostolic times—St. Petronilla—Reasons why Christian sculpture was rare in time of persecution—Christians selected unobjectionable subjects by Pagan sculptors—Pastoral scenes: Ulysses and Sirens, Orpheus, &c.—Sarcophagi in Lateran Museum—Explanation of large sarcophagus—Statues of Good Shepherd, Jonas, Noe, &c. —Cain and Abel—Sheep with bread—Labarum and scenes from Passion—Agapæ—Christ in glory—Elias—Nativity—Sarcophagus of Junius Bassus, with allegorical figures of lambs—Statue of Hippolytus: his Paschal Canon.

Early Christian sculpture.

IT might have been supposed that early Christian sculpture would have sprung up and developed side by side with the sister art of painting; but we shall set forth reasons which sufficiently explain why this was not the case, and why distinctly Christian sculpture can hardly be said to have existed before the age of Constantine. The earliest specimens that have come down to us are the sculptures on Christian sarcophagi, and De Rossi promises us a work which shall contain representations and a full description of all the sarcophagi, and fragments of sarcophagi, that have been found in the Cemetery of St. Callixtus. The finest collection of Christian sarcophagi in the world is that in the Lateran Palace. It was commenced by Father Marchi in 1851, and additions have

R.S., iii. 440.

been made from time to time under the direction of the Commendatore De Rossi. Before examining this interesting collection of early Christian sculpture, it is worth while to inquire into the Christian use of this mode of burial, in order that we may gain some general idea as to the date of the specimens before us.

Sarcophagi

The use of sarcophagi, or stone coffins, comes down from the remotest Egyptian antiquity; and almost every museum contains specimens of Pagan Roman sarcophagi. This ancient mode of burial had almost ceased to be practised in the time of Augustus, and did not again become common among the Romans until the time of Hadrian and the Antonines, although the Scipios and other distinguished families buried their dead in sarcophagi; and Visconti and Cavedoni give examples of this mode of burial in the first century. Thus, Poppæa was buried, "not burned with fire, as is the Roman custom, but after the manner of foreign kings, embalmed with spices."[1]

used by Christians in Apostolic age.

The Christians, who maintained that, in refusing to burn their dead, they followed the more ancient way, naturally made use of sarcophagi. We have seen that the Catacomb of Domitilla,[2] which bears every mark of having been constructed in the time of the Flavian emperors, appears originally to have been intended solely for the reception of those buried in sarcophagi. The *loculi*, cut through the plaster which covers the walls of the first portion of this cemetery, are manifestly later additions; while the wide recesses, in which the sarcophagi once stood, prove the original design of the sepulchre. Beneath the floor of the ambulacrum have been found several sarcophagi made of terra-cotta of the finest workmanship, but these are nearly all of the second century. The earliest form of the *loculus* in this portion of the Catacomb is that in which the outside of the *loculus* is covered with fine white stucco, so as to give it the appearance of a real sarcophagus—De Rossi calls it a *loculo-sarcofago*. In this cemetery the body of St. Petronilla

Bullettino, 1865, 38. *R.S.*, iii. 441.

[1] Tacit. Annal., xiv. 6.

[2] See Vol. I. p. 125.

lay in a stone sarcophagus, in the Catacomb which was in the fourth century converted into the recently-discovered subterranean Basilica.[1] There the Saint was venerated with increasing devotion, especially by Pepin and Charlemagne in the eighth century, until the imperial mausoleum beside St. Peter's on the Vatican was prepared by Pope Stephen II., to which the remains of St. Petronilla, in the same sarcophagus, were translated by Paul I. with great solemnity. The kings of France regarded the spiritual daughter of St. Peter as the special patroness of the Carlovingian race, and in 1474 King Louis XI. restored the altar of this Saint. In consequence, the sarcophagus was exposed to view; and there is a letter of Pope Sixtus IV. to the king, in which he describes it as having four dolphins at the corners. The inscription,

Bullettino, 1878, 135, &c.

AURELIAE PETRONILLAE FILIAE DVLCISSIMAE,

is said to have been engraven by the hand of St. Peter himself, whose daughter, in the Gospel, this Saint of Cæsar's household was. The sarcophagus of Linus, the immediate successor of St. Peter, is related by Severano to have been found in the time of Urban VIII., during the restoration of the Confession of St. Peter. The Christian use of sarcophagi, then, appears to have been coeval with the introduction of Christianity. There were, however, several reasons which made this mode of burial far from general among the Christians.

They were not, however, in very general use.

In the first place, the sarcophagus was an expensive article, and the mass of the Christian community was composed of the poor. The conveyance of a heavy stone coffin from the city to the cemetery required the presence of a considerable number of workmen, and must have attracted more attention to the Christian cemeteries than was generally desirable. Consequently we find, at a very early period, the *sepolcro a mensa*, which is nothing else but a sarcophagus cut out of the living rock; and the later form of this kind of sepulchre was,

[1] See Vol. I. p. 183.

as we have seen, the *arcosolium*, which has been described as "an excavated sarcophagus, with arched niche above."

Even when the Christians did bury their dead in sarcophagi, they do not appear, until the ages of persecution had passed away, to have ornamented them with sculptures of a distinctive Christian character. Out of the four hundred and ninety-three dated inscriptions, described by De Rossi as belonging to the first four centuries, only eighteen are found on sarcophagi, and of these not more than four bear dates anterior to the time of Constantine. These are ornamented with genii, or griffins, or pastoral or hunting scenes; and the earliest dated sarcophagus, with a distinctively Christian subject sculptured upon it, is one from the Catacomb of SS. Peter and Marcellinus,

Christian subjects not sculptured on sarcophagi during ages of persecution.

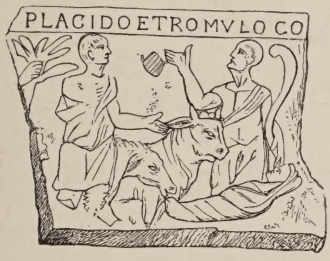


FIG. 88.—*Fragment of dated Sarcophagus with Nativity.*

upon which is represented the Nativity with the ox and ass, and which bears a consular date corresponding to A.D. 343.

This tardy development of Christian sculpture cannot be explained by the supposition that the Church forbade or discouraged the representation of sacred subjects and symbols, for if such had been the case, the same rule would have applied to painting, and we have seen that no restriction was placed upon the Christian artist even from the Apostolic age. A simple explanation of the contrast presented by these two branches of Christian art is to be found in the consideration of the widely-different circumstances under which the painter and the sculptor pursued their respective callings during times of persecution. The Christian artist, concealed in the bowels

Reason of this.

of the earth, prosecuted his labours without fear of danger; while the sculptor would be unable to execute Christian subjects in his workshop without drawing a dangerous attention to his work.

Fabretti has given a drawing of a monument, the original of which is preserved at Urbino, on which is represented a Christian sculptor in the act of prosecuting his trade. Although the Christianity of Eutropus is proved by the dove with the olive branch, and the inscription "Holy, God-fearing Eutropus in Peace," put up to him by his son, yet neither on the sarcophagus that he is carving, nor on the small one by its side,

FIG. 89.—*Tombstone of a Christian Sarcophagus-maker.*

are there any distinctive symbols of Christianity. This monument is assigned by De Rossi to the third century.[1]

We may, therefore, say generally that upon the sarcophagi, prior to the time of Constantine, we find Christianity, if represented at all, veiled under forms which were not unknown even to the Pagans; while upon those belonging to the period which followed the peace of the Church, we notice at once the reproduction in marble of the same series of sacred subjects which we have seen reduced to a regular symbolical system in the subterranean fresco-paintings of the second and third centuries. In fact, no sooner was peace given to the Church than Christian art sprang up everywhere,

[1] See Epitaphs of the Catacombs, p. 171.

and sarcophagi of the fourth century, adorned with Christian sculptures, have been found in Arles[1] and Saragossa as freely as in Rome, Ravenna, or Milan. A few sarcophagi have been found at Spoleto, and De Rossi describes a very interesting fragment of one representing JESUS steering the mystic ship with MARCUS, LUCAS, and JOANNES, as rowers; and their names are carved so as to remove all doubt as to the signification. The missing portion doubtless bore the figure and name of the other evangelist, MATTHAEUS.

Bullettino, 1871, 74.

There were also other difficulties in the way of the Christian sculptor. If he had been before his conversion a maker of idols, he was required, under pain of excommunication,[2] to give up his art "excepting only those things which are useful for man." The Acts of the *Quatuor Coronati*, whose martyrdom is celebrated on Nov. 8th, show the danger to which a Christian sculptor was exposed. These four sculptors were ordered to make basins for fountains ornamented with cupids and figures of Victory, about which they seem to have had no scruple. They also made an image of the Sun with a chariot and four horses. But when they were commanded to make an image of Æsculapius they refused and suffered martyrdom in consequence. A Christian who carried on the trade of a sculptor would live in constant danger of receiving commissions which would force him to declare his faith at the risk of his life.

Dangers of a Christian sculptor.

R.S., iii. 579.

From the difficulties in the way of anything like the formation of a Christian school of sculpture during the ages of persecution, it is evident that those who wished to procure

Subjects selected by Christians from the Pagan shops.

[1] A great number of Christian sarcophagi, discovered in the neighbourhood of Arles, may still be seen in the museum of that city. There appears to have been a very considerable school of Christian sculpture there. And on the corners of the sarcophagi, where the pagans placed masks (see p. 240), and the Roman Christians the heads of SS. Peter and Paul, these sculptors carved the head of a young beardless man, always the same. De Rossi thinks it is the patron of Arles, the youthful Genesius. *Bull.*, 1864, 46–48.

[2] See Const. Apost. viii. 32, and *Canones S. Hippolyti arabice*, can. xi.

sarcophagi must have had recourse to the shops of the heathen; and an examination of the fragments which remain of these ages proves, that they took considerable pains to select those which did not directly offend against the Christian religion by representing idolatrous rites, or false gods, or scenes clearly peculiar to Paganism. Sarcophagi with such scenes sculptured upon them are sometimes indeed to be met with in the Cata-

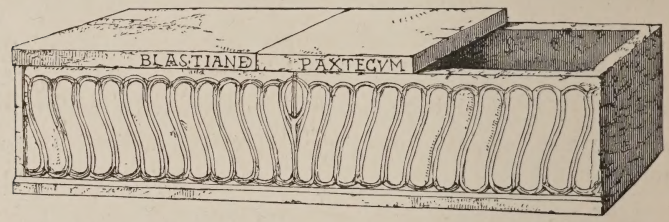


FIG. 90.—*Very ancient Sarcophagus, found in Crypt of Lucina.*

combs, but they have either been carefully defaced with a chisel, or turned against the wall; and when used to close *loculi*, the sculpture has been turned towards the inside of the tomb. For instance, a bacchanalian scene sculptured on a sarcophagus was found in the Cemetery of Lucina, turned against the wall, while the rough side was exposed to view, and on this side was inscribed the name of the deceased, IRENE. The sarcophagi usually found in Christian cemeteries

R.S., i. 344.

FIG. 91.—*Small Sarcophagus in St. Callixtus.*

Pastoral scenes.

are ornamented either by wave lines, or by scenes of pastoral life, agriculture, the chase, and (more rarely) comic figures.

R.S., i. 341.

The acclamation *Blastiane pax tecum* is regarded by De Rossi as a proof that this sarcophagus, found in the ambulacrum V. of the area of Lucina, is of very ancient, if not of Apostolic date.

Fishes, and especially dolphins, are very common both on

Christian and Pagan sarcophagi. We have explained their Christian signification,[1] which was familiar to the friends of "Longlianus, buried on the 6th of April," under the staircase B in the primary Area of St. Callixtus.

Figures with their hands raised in prayer, *oranti*, were not unknown on Pagan tombs. A shepherd with a sheep on his shoulders is also to be found among heathen subjects. These were at once expressive of thoroughly Christian ideas, and were consequently in great request, as the numerous examples of them testify. Sometimes, other subjects appear less susceptible of a Christian interpretation. Cupid and Psyche are represented side by side with a Good Shepherd, who is overturning a basket of fruit, an omen of evil rather

Good Shepherd with Cupid and Psyche.

FIG. 92.—*Sarcophagus found among the ruins of an ancient chamber in St. Callixtus.*

than good. It is, however, fair to add, that this sculpture was found with signs of plaster upon it, and had been buried beneath the floor of the chamber, indicated in plan as Q. Another, found in the crypt of Lucina, represents the story of Ulysses and the Sirens, and it is probable that the monogram of TYRANIO was a disguised form of the Cross. This is not the only instance of the representation of this fable on Christian tombs; and in the third century the author of the Philosophumena recommended the faithful to imitate Ulysses and his companions; "My advice to my readers is to adopt a similar expedient, viz., either on account of their infirmity to smear their ears with wax, and sail [straight on] through

R.S., ii. 169, 170.

Ulysses and Sirens.

R.S., i. 344.

[1] *Supra*, pp. 80, 81.

the tenets of the heretics, not even listening to [doctrines] that are easily capable of enticing them into pleasure, like the luscious lay of the Sirens, or, by binding oneself to the Tree of Christ, hearkening with fidelity [to His words], not to be distracted, inasmuch as he has reposed his trust in Him to whom ere this he has been firmly knit, and to continue

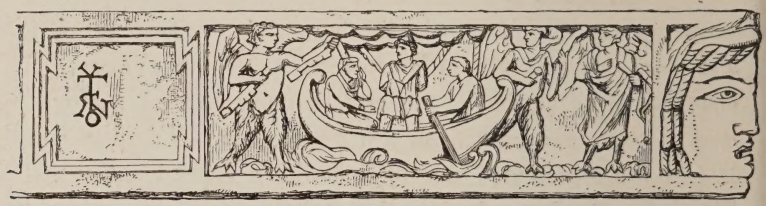


FIG. 93.—*Sarcophagus in Crypt of Lucina.*

steadfast."[1] "Sail past the song," says St. Clement of Alexandria,[2] "it works death. Exert your will only, and you have overcome ruin. Bound to the wood of the Cross, thou shalt be freed from destruction. The Word of God will be thy pilot, and the Holy Spirit will bring thee to anchor in the haven of heaven." Both these fragments of sarcophagi may be seen in the Catacomb of St. Callixtus.

FIG. 94.—*Sarcophagus still containing a body, in St. Callixtus.*

The Good Shepherd at each end of one of the sarcophagi in that Catacomb, which still contains the well-preserved body of a man, was probably taken from the Pagan shops. The dog at his feet is foreign to Christian art. Yet the chamber was probably not made before the fourth century, and another

[1] Philosophum. vii. 1. Ante-Nicene Libr. p. 267.
[2] Clem. Alex. *Exhort. ad Gentes.* c. 12.

sarcophagus in it is covered with subjects wholly Biblical. Modern interpreters have seen in the two shepherds, one youthful and the other bearded, the types of Christ and St. Peter; and it is possible that the same idea may have recommended the sarcophagus to its Christian purchasers. In the Lateran Museum a fair specimen of a Pagan Good Shepherd, adapted to Christian purposes, may be seen about the middle of the hall, on the right-hand side. It is from the Cemetery of Priscilla, and is engraved in Aringhi.[1] It represents three shepherds, one holding a sheep by its tail, or perhaps milking it after the Italian mode; the second with a sheep on his

FIG. 95.—*Part of Sarcophagus of Paulina.*

shoulders and another at his feet, while the third leans on his staff and watches three sheep feeding on the mountain-side, a fourth lying at his feet. This sarcophagus bears the inscription:—

ΕΝΘΑΔΕ ΠΑΥΛΕΙΝΑ
ΚΕΙΤΑΙ ΜΑΚΑΡΩΝ
ΕΝΙ ΧΩΡΩ
ΗΝ ΚΗΔΕΥΣΕ ΠΑΚΑΤΑ
ΕΗΝ ΘΡΕΠΤΕΙΡΑΝ
ΓΛΥΚΕΡΗΝ
ΑΓΙΑΝ ΕΝ ΧΡΩ

"Here Paulina lies in the place of the blessed [martyrs] whom Pacata buried [for she was] her sweet and holy nurse in Christ."

[1] Rom. Sott., ii. 123.

Bosio says that it was dug up out of the Cemetery of St. Priscilla on the Via Salaria, and he infers from the inscription that that cemetery was a celebrated resting-place of saints.[1] The sarcophagus, with Orpheus and a fisherman sculptured upon it, reminds us of the passage of St. Clement of Alexandria already quoted,[2] and which concludes: "Behold the might of the New Song! It has made men out of stones, men out of beasts. Those, moreover, that were as dead, not being partakers of the true life, have come to life again, simply by becoming listeners to this song."[3] These last words, alluding to Eurydice, may have induced the bereaved Christian husband to purchase this sarcophagus for "*Furia, my sweet holy soul*," as the inscription expresses it.

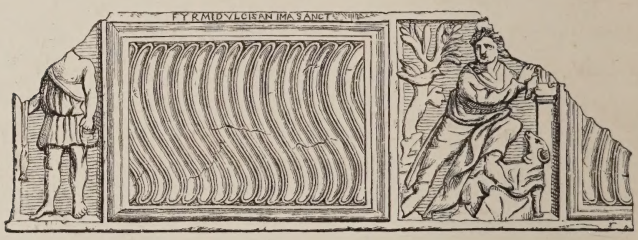


FIG. 96.—*Part of Sarcophagus with Orpheus.*

Sarcophagi in the Lateran. That nearest the entrance.

Since sculpture cannot be said to have existed as a Christian art before the time of Constantine, we may safely attribute nearly all the sarcophagi, with distinctively Christian subjects sculptured upon them, to the fourth and fifth centuries. They come from the cemeteries above ground, or from the basilicas and oratories erected in them.

Having thus determined an approximation to their date, we may pass on to examine some of the more remarkable specimens. We will commence with the large sarcophagus which stands at the end of the hall in the Lateran, and which is usually the first to attract the attention of visitors. A litho-

[1] Bosio, Rom. Sott., p. 513. [2] Supra, p. 32.
[3] Clem. Alex., vol. i., A. N. Libr. p. 120.

graph is given of it in Plate XXIII. This sarcophagus was recently found above the tomb of St. Paul, when the excavations were made for the construction of the magnificent Baldacchino which now covers the high altar in his basilica on the Via Ostiensis. That basilica was rebuilt by Theodosius towards the close of the fourth century, and this sarcophagus appears to have been placed there about that time. The unfinished faces of the busts in the centre, doubtless intended for the man and woman to be buried in it, and other heads in the same incomplete condition, show that some circumstance prevented the execution of the original design. It has been suggested that the invasion of the Goths under Alaric was the cause, and this would fix the date at A.D. 410.

Symbolical meaning of Biblical subjects.

In the interpretation of the symbolism of the Biblical subjects sculptured on this and other sarcophagi, we shall assume that our readers have accepted the principles laid down in Chapter III. of Book I., although it will be seen that certain subjects are very frequently met with in sculpture which rarely if ever appear in the Catacomb paintings. These will require more detailed treatment.

The Holy Trinity.

Beginning at the right hand of the upper part of the sarcophagus, we have three bearded figures representing, by their unity of operation, the Three Persons of the Ever-Blessed Trinity. The Eternal Father, as the source and fountain of Deity, is symbolised by the figure in the chair, veiled, as the episcopal chair was, in token of His supreme dignity. In front of Him is a figure who represents the Eternal Word, by whom all things were made, in the act of creating Eve from the side of the sleeping Adam. Behind the seated figure stands a third, to represent the Holy Ghost, who co-operates in the work of creation.[1] In the next group we

[1] This is the interpretation of Padre Marchi, and followed and defended by De Rossi (See *Bull.*, 1865, 68). P. Garrucci, however, maintains that the figure behind the chair is intended to represent God the Father, the seated figure, God the Son, and the figure bringing Eve out of Adam's side, God the Holy Ghost. Cardinal Franzelin adopts the same view

The Fall.

see the serpent with the fatal apple in his mouth, which he offers to our common mother, while between the guilty pair is our Lord, here represented without a beard, because it was in the depth of the shame of the fall that He was revealed as the promised Seed who should be born of the woman, and the Incarnation is expressed by the signs of youth. He gives to Adam a sheaf, for "in the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat bread;" while to Eve he gives a lamb, a type of domestic labour in spinning, and also of the Lamb of God whom the second Eve was to bring forth to atone for all the evil that the first Eve had brought upon mankind.

Immediately below we see two other groups, evidently intended to contrast in some way with those already described. Here the Eternal Word is again represented, but this time not according to His Divine Nature by which He is co-equal with the Father, but He is the Word made flesh, an infant on His mother's knee. The Holy Ghost is represented just as before, for it was by the operation of the Holy Ghost that Mary conceived the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity in her virginal womb. Her chair is not veiled,

The Epiphany.

to distinguish the most blessed of creatures from the unapproachable Creator; and to mark the twofold generation of Christ, that which is invisible, by which He was born of the Father before all worlds, and that which was made manifest, by which He was born of His mother in the world. The universality of His kingdom is typified by the three Magi, the representatives of the whole Gentile Church. And finally, the application of the universal redemption to the individual is set

Our Lord giving sight to the blind.

forth by Christ giving sight to the blind, while He holds in His hand a roll, either to signify His Divine mission, or to show that it is His doctrine which alone can enlighten the eyes of the darkened understandings of men.

(*De Deo Trino*, Thesis xiii. p. 214). In a sarcophagus from the Cemetery of St. Agnes, a single figure seated on a veiled chair receives the offerings of Cain and Abel. If we are to assign this to either of the Three Persons it will of course be God the Father. (See engraving in Aringhi, R.S., ii. 73.)

Turning now to the upper portion of the other side of the sarcophagus, we see our Lord with the rod of His power changing the water into wine, and multiplying the loaves, the well-known patristic symbols of the Holy Eucharist, in which the wine becomes His blood, and the bread His flesh, which He gives for the life of the world. And then, as a type and foreshadowing of the power of the Holy Eucharist even upon the mortal body, according to the promise, "He that eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood hath everlasting life, and I will raise him up in the last day," we have a third group, mutilated indeed, but with enough remaining to show that it represents the raising of Lazarus. Eucharistic types.

Beneath this Eucharist series, as we may call it, we see St. Peter, having had already committed to him the rod of power, which our Lord held in the former series, and yet receiving from His Master the solemn warning, "Before the cock crow thou shalt deny Me thrice." The uplifted hand of our Lord, and the cock at St. Peter's feet, express this with sufficient clearness, while the rod in the Apostle's hand shows that his fall would not deprive him of his great prerogatives, but that, being converted, he should "confirm his brethren." St. Peter.

The next group represents the apprehension of St. Peter; the bearded face and general similarity of expression identify the Apostle, and distinguish him from his Divine Master. The Jewish caps mark the satellites of Herod Agrippa, and it is worthy of note that, though they have power to lead the Apostle whither he would not, yet he still retains the rod, for "the Word of God is not bound," and Imperial soldiers, who repeated the scene over and over again in the person of Peter's successors, have never been able to wrest from him the rod of power with which he rules the Church as Vicar of Christ.[1]

[1] Paisius Ligarides, the worthless opponent of the Muscovite Patriarch Nicon, once a student at the Greek College in Rome, says, "There is an old tradition, that our Lord by His question to Peter thrice repeated

Another reason, which probably led to the very frequent representation of this scene in St. Peter's life, is that his imprisonment and miraculous deliverance was the immediate cause of his coming to Rome and founding the Church there; and thus Roman Christians would see in the apprehension of St. Peter the symbol of "the Holy See of Blessed Peter, through which," in the words of St. Leo, Rome "was made a priestly and royal city, and the head of the world, extending her sway more widely by the religion of God than ever she had done by earthly domination."[1] The next group is a mutilated representation of Moses striking the rock, of the waters flowing, from which the people of Israel are drinking. We shall see that the glasses found in the Catacombs enable us to interpret this as a symbol of St. Peter, and in him the Christian priesthood, touching with the rod of power the Rock from which the spiritual Israel draw grace for all their needs.

Moses striking the rock.

This interpretation is confirmed by a small sarcophagus, to be seen behind the statue of St. Hippolytus, at the end of the Hall. A photograph of it forms the frontispiece to this Volume, reproduced from one of the series of photographs executed by Mr. Parker's direction. That gentleman describes

The arrest of St. Peter.

meant to set him right of his former thrice-repeated denial, saying, "Peter, lovest thou Me?" and that as He said the words, "Feed My lambs," "Feed My sheep," He gave him a staff significative of pastoral authority. For as Moses, when constituted leader of the people of Israel received the staff of the patriarch Jacob, which had been inherited by his son Joseph, and after his death had been taken to Pharaoh's palace, and was given by the daughter of Pharaoh, the princess Thermoutis (wife of Thothmes), to Moses her adopted son;—so Peter also, being put forward from all the sheep of the world, and at once appearing to be, and being called and indicated as the mouth of the whole choir of the Apostles, receives the charge of being leader of the flock, as Theophylact declares, in meet recompense for the ardour of his love. This staff of the Prince of the Apostles the Christians living at Antioch once upon a time having set up as a conquering standard against the Hagarenes, put to flight 40,000 of them" (Palmer's *The Patriarch and the Tsar*, vol. iii. p. 109). Whatever may be thought of this tradition, it is a curious comment on the figures under consideration.

[1] Serm. i. in Nat. Apost. See Corn. à Lap. in Act. xii. 17.

it as "St. Peter striking the rock, and bringing out the Stream of Life, at which the faithful Jews are drinking. The arrest of St. Peter."[1]

Daniel among the lions.

The remaining group, beneath the busts of the persons for whom the sarcophagus was intended, represents Daniel in the lions' den, protected by God under the figure of an old man, while the figure offering to Daniel a basket of food represents the prophet Habacuc, whom "the angel of the Lord took by the top of his head, . . . and set him in Babylon, over the den, in the force of His Spirit. Then Habacuc cried, saying: 'O Daniel, thou servant of God, take the dinner that God hath sent thee.'"[2] This group is met with very frequently both in painting and sculpture. It is found in the earliest-known Catacomb, and it may be seen in the subterranean church of San Clemente, among frescoes of the tenth century. The continuator of the *Liber Pontificalis* mentions Gregory IV. having adorned altar frontals with gilded representations of Daniel in the lions' den. The writings of the early Fathers inform us that the Christians saw in Daniel the type of the Christian martyr, sometimes like Daniel unharmed by the savage beast to which he was exposed in the arena, but always victorious over those who could at most only destroy the body, and consoled in the dungeon, in which he awaited his martyrdom, by the Christian priest who strengthened him for the conflict with the heavenly food of the Holy Eucharist. Thus St. Cyprian applies the history: "For since all things are God's, nothing will be wanting to him who possesses God, if God Himself be not wanting to him. Thus a meal was divinely provided for Daniel when he was shut up by the king's command in the den of lions; and in the midst of wild beasts who were hungry and yet spared him, the man of God was fed."[3] That by this bread was understood the

Bullettino, 1865, 74.

[1] Sculpture, Plate XIX.

[2] Dan. xiv. 32–38. In the Protestant version it is called "The Story of Bel and the Dragon."

[3] S. Cypr. De Oratione, 21.

Holy Eucharist is evident from a sarcophagus at Brescia, where Habacuc brings with the bread also the mystic Fish. De Rossi has seen the same addition in other sarcophagi.

Ancient Christian statues.

On either side of this sarcophagus are two small statues of the Good Shepherd.[1] Besides these two statues a third has been found by F. Mullooly in San Clemente, and a fourth is preserved in the Kircherian Museum. A bust of our Saviour was found among the ruins of the tomb of St. Helena. The Museum of the Duke of Medina-Cœli in Seville, possesses a statue of the Good Shepherd; and a statuette in white marble about twenty inches high, which De Rossi believes to belong to the third century, is preserved in the Old Seraglio, on the site of the Church of St. Irene at Constantinople. De Rossi gives an engraving of this statuette. Eusebius tells us that statues of our Lord, under this form, were set up by Constantine at Constantinople, but in Rome early Christian sculpture is generally confined to *bassi rilievi*. Another remarkable exception will be noticed before we leave this Museum.

Bullettino, 1869, p. 44.

The first sarcophagus on our left, as we pass up the hall, is one whose lid is ornamented with sea-monsters, and bears the

FIG. 97.—*Lid of Sarcophagus of Primitiva.*

inscription—MARIVS . VITELLIANVS . PRIMITIVAE . CONIVGI . FIDELISSIMAE . AAIKCBB IN ☧. "Marius Vitellianus to his most faithful wife Primitiva. Hail, innocent soul; dear wife, mayest thou live in Christ."[2] This lid, however, in all probability, belongs to another sarcophagus, since in Bosio's time this latter was used as the cistern for a fountain in the Medici

[1] Already engraved in Fig. 3, page 29.

[2] Such at least is the interpretation adopted by De Rossi, who follows Maffei in understanding the congeries of letters at the end as the initials of *Ave anima innocens kara conjux bibas in Christo.—Bull.* 1868, 10.

Gardens, on the Pincio, whither it had been removed from the Crypt of St. Peter's. The central group, immediately beneath the inscription, again represents the smitten rock and the apprehension of St. Peter; while on the one side is our Lord calling Lazarus as a mummy out of the tomb, close to which stands Martha; her sister Mary kneels at the feet of our Lord, and the disciples stand around. On the other side is a Good Shepherd watching over two sheep in a temple-like house, probably intended for the Church. But the most striking subject on the sarcophagus is the history of Jonas, who is represented first as being cast out of a ship, the large sail of which is filled with the wind from the conch-shell of the winged figure above. The sea-monster opens his enormous jaws to

Sarcophagus with Jonas.

FIG. 98.—*Sarcophagus from Crypt of St. Peter's.*

receive Jonas, and a female bust in the sky apparently indicates the calm which succeeded. The same monster is next represented as vomiting forth the prophet upon the dry ground, upon which crabs, lizards, and snails are seen crawling about. Close to this scene is the reclining figure of Jonas asleep under the grateful shade of the gourd. The sculptor has filled every bit of available space with figures, and the same water in which float the sea-monsters is made to bear up a little square box, intended for the Ark, in which Noe sits and receives the olive-branch from the dove, which is made, perhaps not without meaning, to come from the place of refreshment where the prophet reposes. At the water's edge, on either side, are represented fishermen—in one case hooking a fish which a boy

is assisting him to land, and in the other, giving the basket of fish to the boy. A water bird is also looking out for prey, and may be intended to convey the warning, that others, besides those whom Christ has made "fishers of men," are on the watch for those who are born of the waters.

Sarcophagus with Cain and Abel offering sacrifice.

On the same side of the hall is another sarcophagus, upon the lid of which are two shepherds, each taking care of three

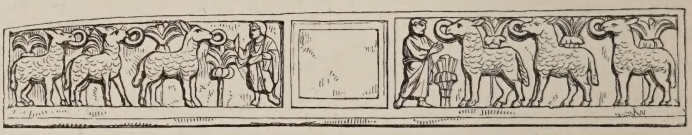


FIG. 99.—*Lid of Sarcophagus with sheep and Shepherds.*

sheep rather larger than themselves. Every one of the sheep holds a circular roll of bread in his mouth, evidently a figure of the Holy Eucharist, which (we have already said) was formerly consecrated in bread made in the shape of a *corona.* The sarcophagus itself is ornamented with sacred subjects, the first of which is the sacrifice of Cain and Abel. The invisible God is represented by the bearded figure seated on a stone,

FIG. 100.—*Sarcophagus, with Cain and Abel, &c.*

which possibly has reference to the rude altar of patriarchal times; Cain, as the eldest, offers his fruits first, while Abel follows with his lamb. In the next group, the Fall is again represented, but Eve has taken the apple, and the promised Saviour, beardless, as in all representations of the Incarnation, holds the sheaf in His hand, but extends it towards the seated

figure, as though to imply that the bread obtained by the sweat of Adam's brow is to be offered to God, if His blessing is to be expected upon the labour of man. He does not here give the lamb to Eve, Abel's offering, perhaps, sufficiently conveying the lesson. The central figure is a female with an open box in her hand, the "alabaster box of precious ointment" which Mary poured on our Lord's head, and of which He said, "Wheresoever this Gospel shall be preached in the whole world, that also which she hath done shall be told for a memory of her."[1] The remaining subjects are the paralytic carrying his bed, our Lord giving sight to the blind, changing the water into wine, and raising Lazarus from the tomb.

St. Mary Magdalene.

Proceeding still further along this side of the Museum, the visitor will hardly fail to notice a very finely sculptured sarcophagus, in the centre of which are the busts of two men, whose refined and intellectual expression of face contrasts strongly with the rude grotesqueness of most of these sculptures. It is impossible to say who these two men were; but the sarcophagus, which probably once contained their remains, formerly stood beneath the altar in the tribune of *S. Paolo fuori le mura*, and the relics of the Holy Innocents were placed within it. Sixtus V. removed it with the relics to a chapel built by him in Sta. Maria Maggiore. The upper series of figures represent Mary kissing Our Saviour's hand in gratitude for having restored her brother Lazarus to life; Peter warned of his denial before the cock should crow; and Moses receiving the law from a hand stretched out from heaven. Another outstretched hand checks the uplifted arm of Abraham as he is about to sacrifice his son Isaac, who kneels with his hands bound behind his back. The sacrifice of the true Isaac is not found among the subjects selected by early Christian art, but the article of the Creed, "crucified under Pontius Pilate," is set forth here with sufficient clearness in the group which represents the servant with the ewer and basin standing ready

Sarcophagus from *S. Paolo fuori le mura.*

Pilate washing his hands.

[1] St. Matt. xxvi. 13.

FIG. 101.—*Sarcophagus from St. Paul's outside the Walls.*

to wash the hands of the irresolute governor, who, seated on his veiled judgment-seat, turns away his head in token of his repugnance in condemning the innocent blood. Our interpretation of Moses as the figure of St. Peter is confirmed by this sarcophagus, on the lower portion of which we see that Apostle in the hands of Herod's satellites, still pointing to the stream which flows from the rock above his head; while Christ, or possibly St. John, is represented as also engaging the attention of the satellites, either in allusion to His own apprehension in the Garden, or else to teach that He suffers still in the persecution of His Church. Again, we see Daniel in the lions' den, and the prophet Habacuc, while, on the opposite side, our Lord gives sight to the blind, and multiplies the loaves and fishes. In the centre, however, is a group which has somewhat puzzled the learned. Bosio makes the old man under the tree to be Moses giving the law to the people, and the head which appears between the branches of the tree to be that of Zaccheus climbing up in order to see our Lord.

St. Peter.

On the same side of the hall is a sarcophagus, with the nearest resemblance to the later representations of our Saviour's Passion to be found in early Christian art. It is

Sarcophagus with the *labarum.*

FIG. 102.—*Sarcophagus in Lateran Museum of fourth or fifth century.*

divided into five compartments by twisted Corinthian pillars, the pediments above which are decorated with scenes from the vintage. In the central compartment is the *labarum*, surrounded with a crown of immortality, and supported on a cross, on each of the arms of which is a dove pecking at the

crown, thus symbolically representing the hope of an immortal crown with Christ, which feeds the soul, although here below its only resting-place is His Cross. The guards appointed by Constantine to keep watch over the sacred standard are represented below by two soldiers; and we may see here a type of the Christian army, who, whether they sleep or wake, live or die, find rest beneath the Cross. Two of the side compartments represent Our Lord witnessing a good confession before Pontius Pilate, above whom hangs a crown, the reward of those who confess Christ before men. On the other side a soldier places a crown on the head of our Saviour, but it resembles rather the crown of glory which is the recompense of the crown of thorns endured for Him on earth. The last compartment contains a representation of our Lord carrying His Cross under the guard of a soldier, but there are none of the traces of suffering with which later artists, following the sacred narrative, have familiarised our imagination, and the crown above points to the reward for bearing the Cross after our suffering Master. Above this sarcophagus is let into the wall a fragment of another, which represents a number of persons, some listening with devout attention to one who is reading to them, while others of the same company are partaking of the *agapæ*.

Representations of the Passion.

Perhaps the finest specimen of Christian sculpture among all the sarcophagi in the Lateran Museum is that which stands under a canopy supported by two beautiful columns of Pavonazzetto marble, and is placed in this position to show how the sarcophagi were arranged in the ancient basilicas; for this, as well as the one last described, were found in the crypt of St. Peter's. The front of the sarcophagus is sculptured with figures in high relief, divided into groups by eight richly-ornamented pillars. The groups at the two extremities are Abraham's sacrifice, and our Lord before Pilate, who is washing his hands. The rest of the figures are the Apostles grouped around our Lord, who is seated in the centre as in

Sarcophagus under canopy.

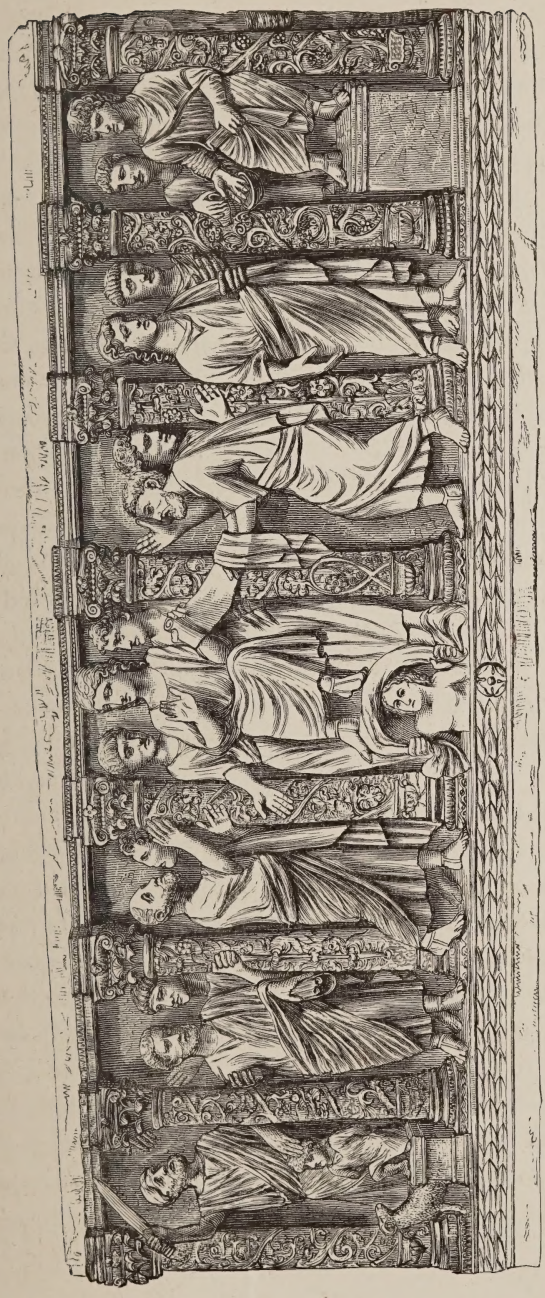


FIG. 103.—*Sarcophagus from the Crypt of St. Peter.*

N. B.—This engraving does not do justice to the fine Grecian type of the faces in the original.—See Simelli's photograph of it.

Our Lord in glory surrounded by the Apostles.

glory, the vault of heaven beneath His feet being expressed (as in Pagan monuments) by the veil which a female figure holds above her head. De Rossi remarks that the grace and refinement of the faces of our Lord and the Apostles would incline us to ascribe this work to the age of Septimius Severus,[1] rather than to that of Constantine, did not the ☧ on one of the sides indicate the latter as its actual date. The two principal figures among the Apostles are manifestly intended for SS. Peter and Paul, and the characteristics of each Apostle are easily to be discerned here. St. Paul is on the right, distinguished by his baldness from St. Peter, who receives, with hands reverently veiled, the new law from the Mediator of the New Testament, just as heathen magistrates were wont to receive from the emperors the book of the constitutions whereby they were to govern the province committed to their charge. Often, on similar representations, our Lord is represented as giving the volume to the Apostle, but saying nothing. In others, again, the roll bears the inscription, DOMINVS DAT LEGEM, or PACEM, sometimes one, and sometimes the other, whence the Bishop Eribert was led to engrave on the Book of the Gospels provided for the cathedral of Milan the words "LEX ET PAX." Here again we see Peter represented as the Moses of the new dispensation, and every such discovery increases the probability that in all other representations also of Moses, the chief Apostle was really meant to be understood. The two sides of this sarcophagus are covered with sculpture. On one is represented the denial of St. Peter, with a basilica and a baptistery in the background, the latter of which (no doubt by an intentional anachronism) is surmounted with the ☧. On the other side is a similar kind of background, but in front is the smitten rock, and, apparently, the "*Noli me tangere*," although this latter group may be intended to represent the gratitude of Mary for the resurrec-

SS. Peter and Paul.

Denial of St. Peter.

[1] Sickler, Almanach aus Rom., pp. 173, 174, actually assigns to it that date.

tion of her brother. This group has been already described, with an engraving of it from Bottari, Fig. 81, page 221.

Sculpture of Elias ascending to heaven, and leaving his *pallium* to Eliseus.

On the visitor's right, as he ascends the staircase at the end of the hall, he will notice a spirited sculptured representation of the ascent of Elias into heaven in the fiery chariot. The sons of the prophets are gazing with eager astonishment at Eliseus, who reverently, and with veiled hands, receives from the ascending prophet the cloak or *pallium*, the symbol of the double portion of the Spirit which rested upon him. In Elias, St. Ambrose and other Fathers saw a figure of our Lord; and

FIG. 104.—*Sculpture in the Lateran Museum, representing the ascent of Elias into heaven.*

Rupertus explains further: "When Elias was on the point of being translated, he laid his *pallium* on Eliseus; because Christ our God and Lord, when about to pass out of this world unto the Father, gave to the Apostles both His office and His Spirit."[1] "Eliseus," says the Venerable Bede, "took the mantle of Elias, and with it struck the waters of Jordan, and when he invoked the God of Elias, they were divided, and he passed over. The Apostles took up, the Church founded by them took up, the sacraments of her Redeemer, and with them

[1] Rupert. Abb. De Trin. v. c. 15.

is spiritually enlightened, cleansed, and consecrated; and she also invoked the name of God the Father, and learned how to conquer the torrent of death, and, despising the hindrance of it, to pass over to eternal life."[1] This history forms the subject of a painting which may still be seen in the Catacomb of SS. Nereus and Achilles. It is carved also at the end of a sarcophagus near the door of the sacristy of St. Peter's containing the bodies of Popes Leo II., III., and IV.; and on two or three other sarcophagi, copied in the works of Bosio, Bottari, and others. It would probably have reminded Roman Christians of the *pallium*, the symbol of jurisdiction worn by the Bishops of Rome, and given by them to metropolitans as from the very body of St. Peter,—"*de corpore Sancti Petri.*"[2] It is worthy of notice, in connection with this subject, and also with the roll given to St. Peter by the ascended Saviour in the last sarcophagus, that the most ancient part of Filocalus' catalogue of the Popes commenced thus:—

R.S., ii 307. "*Passus est Dominus noster Jesus Christus duobus Geminis consulibus viii Kal. Apriles, et post Ascensum ejus beatissimus Petrus episcopatum suscepit, ex quo tempore,*" &c.

"Our Lord Jesus Christ suffered on the 25th of March, the two Gemini being consuls, and after His Ascension the most blessed Peter undertook the episcopacy, after which time," &c.

The Nativity. Above the translation of Elias is a fragment of a small sarcophagus representing the Nativity, with the ox and the ass

Fig. 105.—*Part of Sarcophagus with Nativity, from Aringhi.*

and the Magi; and below is a rude *intaglio* of the raising of Lazarus, on a marble covering of one of the *loculi*, with an

[1] Hom. in Ascen. Dom. [2] See Note F in Appendix to Vol. I.

inscription to DATVS. But our readers will easily be able to interpret for themselves most of the other sculptures in this Museum.

Sarcophagus of Junius Bassus.

As we pass out of the great hall into the upper corridor, around which De Rossi has arranged the columns of inscriptions from the Catacombs, we may observe a number of casts of a sarcophagus, similar to some that we have described, and yet possessing certain remarkable features peculiar to itself. Many of our readers will have seen the original in St. Peter's crypt, where it stands on the right hand of the passage leading to the subterranean chapel, and bears the inscription :—

IVN · BASSVS VC QVI VIXIT ANNIS · XLII MEN . II . IN IPSA
PRAEFECTVRA VRBIS
NEOFITVS IIT AD DEVM · VIII KAL SEPT EVSEBIO ET
YPATIO COSS.

"Junius Bassus, who lived forty-two years and two months. In the very year in which he was Prefect of the city, he went to God, a neophyte, on the 23d of August, A.D. 359."

The noble family of the Bassi is mentioned by Prudentius as having been among the first of patrician rank to embrace the Christian religion;[1] and the death of this very Junius Bassus is recorded by a contemporary writer[2] as having taken place soon after his appointment as Prefect of Rome. The sarcophagus is of white marble, handsomely carved in the Corinthian style; and besides the representations of Adam and Eve, the sacrifice of Isaac, Daniel among the lions, and our Lord in glory delivering the law to His Apostles, we have, on the upper portion, a group in which is represented the apprehension of our Saviour in the garden; and again His condemnation by Pilate. The apprehension of St. Peter appears on the other side, the Apostle being distinguished from his Lord by the beard, thus confirming our explanation of a similar scene on other sarcophagi. The lower portion also

[1] Contr. Symmach. i. 558.

[2] Ammianus Marcellinus.

contains in the centre our Lord's entry into Jerusalem; and, at one extremity, Job comforted by his friends, while his wife, with her handkerchief to her nose, illustrates the complaint of the afflicted patriarch, "My wife hath abhorred my breath."[1] The other extremity contains the representation of a person bound and led away, which, from the baldness of the head, and the sword in the hand of one of his guards, we may consider to be intended for St. Paul being conducted to the place of his execution on the Ostian Way.

Symbolical figures of the Lamb working miracles.

The spandrils of the five arches which make up the lower portion are ornamented with figures which form perhaps the most interesting feature in this sarcophagus. The subjects indeed have been explained before in other sculptures, but here it is a lamb who occupies the place of the Three Children in the furnace of Nabuchadonosor. A lamb with a rod touches the rock from which another lamb drinks. Again, a lamb with the rod multiplies the loaves; a lamb imposes his foot upon the head of another lamb, while a dove pours down a stream of light upon the latter, signifying the sevenfold gift of the Holy Ghost in the sacrament of Confirmation or of Holy Order, or, perhaps this may represent the Baptism of our Lord. Further on, a lamb approaches reverently to receive the law; and lastly, a lamb with the rod brings forth Lazarus from his tomb. These six subjects prove incontestably the symbolical character of the subjects represented on these sarcophagi, and teach us that, whether in the hand of Moses, or of Peter, or of the Lamb, the Divine rod is the power of Christ, by whom the miracles of grace in the sacraments of the Church are still worked.[2]

[1] Job xix. 7.

[2] These six subjects are more clearly to be distinguished in Bosio, Rom. Sott., p. 45, than on the sarcophagus itself, which has probably suffered some damage during the last two hundred years.

It is interesting to observe the comparative frequency of the different scriptural subjects introduced into the sculptured sarcophagi. The following list is taken from Burgon's Letters from Rome, Letter XX., with

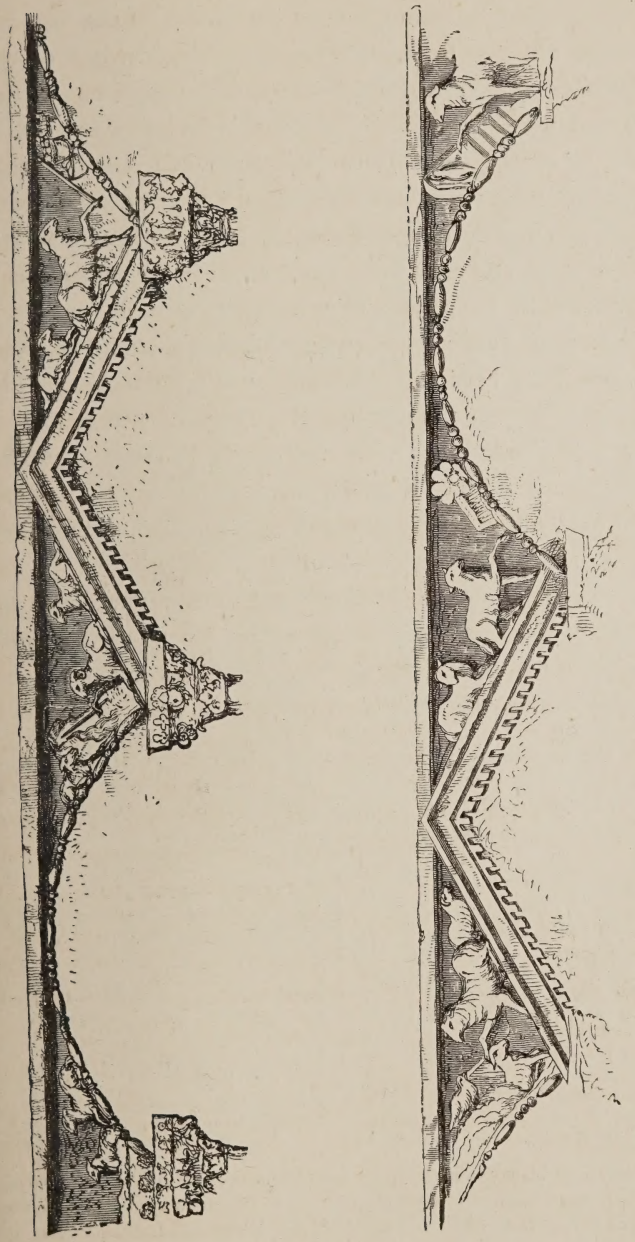


FIG. 106—*Spandrils on the Sarcophagus of Junius Bassus*, A.D. 359.

Statue of St. Hippolytus.

Our account of the Christian sculptures in the Lateran Museum will not be complete without some notice of the statue of St. Hippolytus, which stands at the upper end of the hall, and which is pronounced by Winckelmann and other critics to be the finest known specimen of early Christian sculpture. This statue was discovered, A.D. 1551, when some excavations were being made near the Basilica of San Lorenzo *fuori le mura*, and must have stood either in the subterranean Cemetery of St. Hippolytus, or in a Basilica close by. It bears every mark of having been executed during the third century, for, though the head and arm are modern restorations, yet the classical dignity of the figure is greatly superior to statues of the age of Constantine; while the *Canon Paschalis*, engraved on one of the sides of the chair in which the Saint is seated, would hardly have been considered worthy of commemoration many years after the martyrdom of St. Hippolytus.

Paschal Canon of St. Hippolytus.

We have no intention of taxing our readers' patience with an account of the long disputes concerning the proper time for the observance of Easter, which occupied so much serious attention during the early ages of the Church. It is well

one or two corrections in the description. He counted fifty-five sarcophagi, and we have placed side by side with his numbers those which result from an examination of the forty-eight sarcophagi illustrated by Bosio, thirty of which were found in the crypts of the Vatican :—

	Lateran.	Bosio.		Lateran.	Bosio.
History of Jonas,	23	11	Fall of Adam and Eve,	14	10
The Smitten Rock,	21	16	Woman with Issue of Blood,	8	9
Apprehension of St. Peter,	20	14	Christ's Entry into Jerusalem,	6	8
Miracle of Loaves,	20	14	The Good Shepherd,	6	9
Giving Sight to Blind,	19	11	Noe in Ark,	5	6
Change of Water into Wine,	16	8	Christ before Pilate,	5	6
Raising of Lazarus	16	14	Giving of the Law,	4	6
Denial of St. Peter,	14	8	Three Children in Fire,	4	3
Daniel in Lions' Den,	14	7	Moses taking off his Shoes,	2	2
Paralytic Healed,	12	7	Elias taken up to Heaven,	2	3
Creation of Eve,	11	2	Nativity with Ox and Ass,	1	4
Sacrifice of Isaac,	11	9	Crowning with Thorns,	1	1
Adoration of Magi,	11	8			

Mr. Burgon, in his contemptuous remarks about the symbolical meaning of these sculptures, seems to forget the method of interpreting Holy Scripture well-nigh universal among the Fathers of the fourth and fifth centuries, to which these sarcophagi belong.

FIG. 107.—*Statue of St. Hippolytus, Third Century.*

known, however, that the Roman Church always strenuously opposed those who followed the Jewish reckoning, and who, from their keeping Easter on the 14th day of the lunar month, received the name of *Quartodecimans*. Still, during the first and second centuries the Church had, as was natural, adopted the Jewish mode of determining the Paschal full moon; but the blind fury of that unhappy people against Christianity prejudiced the minds of Christians against anything coming from them; and since, at the beginning of the third century, the Church possessed men in no way inferior to the Jewish rabbis in scientific knowledge, it was fitting that the Christian bishops, and especially the Bishop of Rome, should sanction some authoritative method for determining the great Christian festival.

Hippolytus was the first to form a table, in which, by doubling the Greek periods of eight years, he endeavoured, with the help of seven such periods of sixteen years each, to obtain a formula by which the difference between the lunar and solar years should be corrected, and the true Easter determined for ever. There is, in accordance with this mode of calculation, engraved on the opposite side of the chair to that upon which the *canon* itself is found, a table for 112 years. Unfortunately, St. Hippolytus' method laboured under the fatal defect of an error of three days in every sixteen years; and hence the praise lavished upon the first attempt to form an independent Christian calendar died away, and fresh calculations became necessary. We learn this from a work which has been ascribed to St. Cyprian, and which bears the date of A.D. 243, and whose author, curiously enough, ascribes St. Hippolytus' error of three days to his having calculated from the creation of the world instead of from the 4th day, on which the moon was created! We may therefore assume that this statue belongs to the early part of the third century—indeed, one may conclude it must have been during the first cycle—between 222 and 238, while the errors of Hippolytus'

canon still remained unknown, and the renown of its author caused it to be considered a fitting tribute to his memory.

St. Hippolytus professes that his table will show Easter in the past as well as in the future. He therefore gives some of the more remarkable Paschal solemnities, such as the Exodus, which he makes out to have taken place on April 2d, or April 5th, if Daniel's computation is to be followed. The Paschal solemnities in the desert, in the time of Josue, Ezekias, Josias, and Esdras are also determined. The Pasch in the year when Christ was born, and also in that wherein He suffered, are marked as being of the greatest interest to all Christians.

This calculation and its application fill the greater part of the space on either side of the chair, but the engraver, finding a small space unoccupied, filled it with the names of as many of the works of St. Hippolytus as could be written there. This list commences with the titles of two works, of which only the last four letters can now be deciphered. Critics have exercised their ingenuity in supplying the remainder, but no certainty can be arrived at. The Paschal Canon, and other matters inscribed on this statue, are given with explanations and a treatise by P. Bucher in Migne's edition of the works of St. Hippolytus, to which we must refer those of our readers who desire to investigate further this interesting monument of early Christian art.

BOOK V.

ARTICLES FOUND IN THE CATACOMBS.

CHAPTER I.

MISCELLANEOUS OBJECTS FOUND IN THE CATACOMBS.

Variety of objects found in the Catacombs, classified by De Rossi. 1. *Personal ornaments—cameos and precious stones, rings, necklaces, bracelets, bullæ.* 2. *Toys—dice, children's playthings.* 3. *Tesseræ of various kinds—labels for slaves.* 4. *Domestic utensils,—made of precious stone, marble, ivory and bone—covers of tablets and diptychs—ivories with Christian emblems on them. Articles formed of gold, silver, bronze, glass, and enamel—Remarkable glass bowl—glass phials—Terra-cotta work, amphoræ.* 5. *Coins and medals.* 6. *Articles belonging to tombs, —lamps, their number and variety—ampullæ, their form—instruments of torture.*

Objects found in Catacombs.

THERE are, in many of the great museums of Europe, collections, more or less extensive, of articles found in the Catacombs of Rome. Rings, brooches, clasps, and other personal ornaments; combs, *styli*, and such like articles of ordinary use; toys, medals, coins, *bullæ*, and *tesseræ;* various domestic utensils, as well as articles more directly connected with Christian burials, are marked as having been found in the Catacombs. In some few cases the particular locality where they were found has been mentioned; but, unfortunately, these are only rare instances, and most of those found before this

century are without any clue to the spot where they were discovered. Still, a sufficient number of these articles have been brought to light within the last thirty years to enable us to affirm that the rest have once, like these, been stuck into the cement which surrounded the *loculi* at the time of burial, while the cement was still moist, and they must have been placed there by surviving friends, who wished thus to express their own affection, and to distinguish the grave of their departed relative from those around it. Among the objects thus found the gilded glasses form a class by themselves, and we shall treat of them in a separate chapter. For the present we shall describe the other objects under the various classes in which M. De Rossi has arranged them, and we shall keep in view, as he does, the chronological value of these remnants of antiquity.

1. Personal Ornaments.

Cameos and precious stones.

The most valuable of these objects are the cameos and other precious stones, some of which were evidently set in brooches, or used as *phaleræ*, ornaments worn by Roman patricians. Others are too large for this purpose. Great quantities of these treasures must have been taken from the Catacombs during the last 300 years; although, doubtless, the Lombards and other ancient spoilers had carried off whatever they could lay hands upon centuries before. Boldetti says that "precious stones and fragments of chalcedony, agate, jasper, topaz, plasma,[1] and especially *intagli* in sapphire-agate and cameos of various kinds," found in his time, were collected in the museum of Cardinal Carpegna. He also remarks that "the *intagli* and the most rare and valuable cameos were found in the Cemetery of Priscilla."[2]

Buonarroti has published engravings of some of the most remarkable of these. We may mention a large cameo of

R.S., iii. 581.

[1] A green quartz.

[2] Boldetti, Osservazioni, pp. 495, 496.

chalcedony, in two colours, cut into a portrait of Augustus;[1] a bust of Livia, on jasper-chalcedony;[2] of Plotina, in agate of two colours;[3] and of Commodus, in aqua-marina.[4] The Triumph of Bacchus,[5] and other mythological subjects are found engraved on precious stones, and on glass imitations of gems. The head of Augustus is expressly stated by Boldetti to have been found in the Cemetery of Priscilla, and the Triumph of Bacchus is said in the papers of Sante Bartoli to have been brought to light in 1661, in what is now identified as the Cemetery of Calepodius, on the Via Aurelia.[6] In 1851 De Rossi himself found in the Cemetery of St. Agnes (Ostrianum) and carried to the Christian Museum in the Vatican Library a very fine fragment of the head of Augustus, engraved on a large cameo of Oriental sardonyx. In the same cemetery, he saw in a gallery, containing a dated inscription of the year 291, a beautiful *phalera* of chalcedony still sticking in the cement of a *loculus*. It is remarkable that none of these jewels show any trace of Byzantine art: they all belong to the period when Rome was the capital of the empire.

Rings.

We might have expected to find gems engraved for rings, but neither Bosio nor Boldetti, nor any later explorers, have ever discovered a certain specimen in the Catacombs of a ring

[1] Buonarroti, *Osservazioni istoriche sopra alcune Medaglioni*, &c., p. 45. "The stone is a chalcedony of two colours; the head is formed from being cut in a whitish spot inclining to flesh colour, and would be quite detached like the bust of an ordinary statue, if it were not that behind the nape of the neck there is a sphere of the same stone of sapphirine colour, which serves as a groundwork for the bust. The stone is about 6.29 inches high, by 4.35 inches wide (reduced to English measure), and about the same in thickness."

[2] *Ib.*, p. 415.

[3] *Ib.*, p. 24.

[4] *Ib.*, p. 146.

[5] *Ib.*, p. 427.

[6] This cameo, said to be the largest in the world, is now in the Vatican. It is 16.38 inches long, by 11.68 inches broad, and five different shades of colour appear, according to the depth to which the carving reaches, and this depth had to be most carefully considered by the engraver in order to preserve the proper colours, since the layers of colours are of very variable thickness in different parts of the stone.

with a jewel in it. It is possible that the workmen may have picked up some of such gems and have disposed of them by stealth. Even metal rings without stones in them are extremely rare, while plain rings of bone or ivory are very common. Boldetti gives an engraving of ten metal rings found in the Catacombs. Of these, one bears the symbols of the anchor and the ship, one the dove, two have the ☧ between two palm branches, two the monogram alone, one with the letters A and Ω; one is of classical form terminating in two lions' heads, while the remaining two are furnished with little keys after a well-known Roman fashion. Since Boldetti's time only one such ring has come to light. It is of bronze, with the monogram and the palms, and was found in 1806 in a cemetery on the Via Salaria Nova. Among all these instances, none bears evidence of a period later than the early part of the fourth century. The symbols above described are precisely those mentioned by St. Clement of Alexandria as used in his day on the rings of Christians. The monogram is always of the type of the *labarum* of Constantine; the cross alone never appears. The form of the rings belongs to the Classical, not to the Byzantine period.

Necklaces, Bullæ.

Ornaments for the neck, and lockets to hang from the neck are even now often found in the Catacombs. De Rossi has often seen, sometimes separately stuck in the plaster, perforated beads of glass, enamel, amber, and other material, sometimes within the tomb near the neck or arms of the skeleton lying in such numbers as to show that they had once been necklaces or bracelets. In Imperial times the children of free citizens were distinguished by the wearing of a *bulla*, often made in the form of a heart, and hollow within. These *bullæ* were worn until the age of seventeen, and then hung up as votive offerings in the temples. The rich had them made of gold, the poor of leather, but the shape and material varied greatly. Almost every one wore some kind of amulet. The Christians substituted sacred relics for the superstitious charms

of the Pagans, and in the fifth and sixth centuries made these reliquaries in the form of a cross. De Rossi describes one of these found in a tomb of the Basilica of San Lorenzo. But no cruciform reliquary has been found in the Catacombs. Other ornaments, such as little fish of glass, enamel, mother of pearl, crystal, ivory, and other substances have been found, with holes pierced in them for suspension round the neck. All the *bullæ* found in the Catacombs are of the type used in classical times and not to be distinguished from those found in Pagan sepulchres. The same remark applies to the various earrings, drops, armlets, brooches, clasps, and similar ornaments. They are invariably of the Classical period, and show no trace of Byzantine art.

Bullettino, 1863, 31.

2.—Games and Children's Playthings.

Dice and Toys.

Dice belong rather to the amusements of grown-up persons than to children's games, and these are found in great variety of size in ivory, bone, and stone, stuck like other objects in the cement of the *loculi*. But still more frequently are to be seen the playthings of children. Dolls and puppets with movable joints, sometimes in ivory, but mostly made of bone; sometimes entire, sometimes in fragments, are very common. So also are terra-cotta money-boxes, moulded sometimes into the form of human heads, in a fashion well known to the ancient Romans. Among children's playthings may also be reckoned little bells, generally in bronze with a ring of the same metal. In 1851 De Rossi saw a silver bell of this kind fastened into a *loculus* in a gallery of the third century. Bells were considered by the Pagans as charms against fire, but we have no reason to suppose that these were anything more than children's toys. Playthings made in the shape of animals are often found. The accompanying woodcut represents a small leopard made of a flat piece of bone, found sticking in the plaster of a *loculus* in a gallery in the Area of St. Hippolytus. Every one knows how strongly the human heart is affected by

R.S., iii. 305.

Area XIII., near No. 7.

the sight of toys which have once belonged to a child that is dead, how fondly parents treasure up these precious mementoes of their departed little ones, and we can all understand the feeling that prompted the adornment of children's graves with these instruments of their innocent pastimes. Little wheels, the rims of little mirrors, and little shields, miniature imitations of military trappings, civil decorations, and domestic furniture,—in a word, all the paraphernalia of the baby-house, —have been found affixed to the walls of the Catacombs. It is, however, worthy of notice, that, whereas, in the ruins of houses belonging to the latter part of the fourth, and to the fifth and sixth centuries, children's toys are often found with

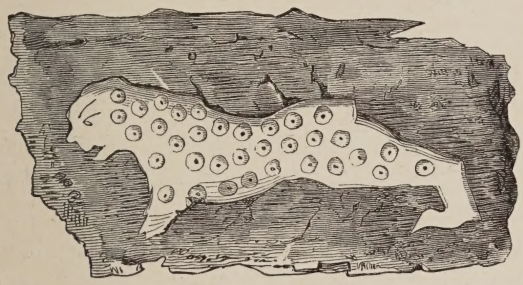


Fig. 108.—*Bone Toy-Leopard in Arenarium of Hippolytus.*

the sacred monogram and other marks of Christianity upon them, no signs of Christianity appear on those found in the Catacombs. It is just possible that a small bronze *labarum*, the impression of which De Rossi found on the plaster of a *loculus*, might have been one of these children's toys. *R.S.*, iii. 341.

3.—*Tesseræ* of Various Kinds.

A variety of objects are included under the word *tessera*. Originally, cubes such as are still used for dice were denoted by this name, and hence mosaic floorings composed of a number of small cubes are still called "tessellated pavement." Small pieces of marble, pottery, glass, mother of pearl, ivory, or precious stones, by no means always preserving the cubical Tesseræ. *R.S.*, iii. 587, &c.

form, were still called *tesseræ*, and used for tokens of various kinds. Thus there was the *tessera hospitalis*, a pledge of mutual friendship between the host and his guest, which was often broken in half, each party retaining one portion, like the broken sixpence of rustic lovers in England. Boldetti gives[1] an engraving of the half of an ivory egg found in the Catacombs, having the busts of a man and his wife with the above them on the section, and the words, *Dignitas amicorum vivas cum tuis feliciter* encircling the outside of the egg. This may be a more elaborate kind of love-token. The *tessera frumentaria* or *nummaria* was a ticket distributed on certain occasions to the poor, which entitled them to receive in exchange the quantity of corn or money denoted by the marks on the token. The *tessera theatralis* was the ticket for a certain seat in the amphitheatre. The *tessera militaris*, the σύνθημα of the Greeks, was a token distributed among the soldiers before a battle, as a means of distinguishing friends from foes. Sometimes it bore upon it the watchword, as the *Venus Genitrix* of Julius Cæsar, or the *Hercules invictus* of Pompey. Examples of all of these may be found in most museums and works illustrative of Roman antiquities.

Tesseræ gladiatoriæ.

A more important class of *tesseræ*, in an archæological point of view, are those given in token of freedom from service to gladiators who had acquitted themselves well in the contests. These *tesseræ gladiatoriæ* have inscribed on them the names of the Consuls for the year, and thus indicate the exact date at which they were used, although these dates have only been found between the times of Sylla and Vespasian.

It might be supposed unlikely that these latter species of *tesseræ* would be found in Christian cemeteries. Yet one has been noticed by Boldetti as discovered in the Cemetery of Callixtus, and two others of the dates B.C. 52 and A.D. 42 have been published by Marini, whose MS. in the Vatican states them to have been found together in the Catacombs beneath

[1] Page 514.

the Villa Pamfili, that is, in part of the Cemetery of Lucina, where the martyrs Processus and Martinianus were buried in Apostolic times. The use of phrases taken from the gladiatorial combats were, from the times of the Apostles, familiar to Christians. St. Paul compares the Christian spiritual conflict to the combatant in the arena,[1] and applies the same illustration to his own sufferings and approaching martyrdom.[2]

The Apocalyptic Epistle to the Church of Pergamus, where Antipas and others had suffered martyrdom, contains the promise—"To him that overcometh, I will give the hidden manna, and will give him a white counter (*calculum*, ψῆφον), and in the counter a new name written, which no man knoweth but he that receiveth it."[3] Here Christ is represented as the Judge of the combat, giving to the victor the *tessera* with the conqueror's name written on it. The *tessera gladiatoria* was usually oblong and flat, and perhaps the sacred writer also alludes to the *tesseræ missiles*, or little balls of glass and other materials, thrown by Nero and some other emperors among the crowd at the shows, and in which was a number corresponding to some prize of money or other gift. Two of these *missilia*, circular, but not spherical, are in the British Museum, one with the letters XII and IB on its sides, the other with XIIII and IΔ. De Rossi considers the little glass, bone, and ivory fishes with numbers on them to be also *missilia*. Many of these various kinds of *tesseræ* have been found in the Catacombs, all bearing evidences of classical antiquity, none showing any sign of Byzantine or Gothic workmanship.

Labels for slaves, &c.

Among the *tesseræ* may be classed the tablet of ivory, in the Vatican Library, with other objects from the Catacombs, which bears the words TENE ME NE FVGIA, and was evidently once hung round the neck of a slave. These tablets were introduced in the time of Constantine, who forbad the degrading custom of branding the foreheads of slaves. It is the only

[1] 1 Cor. x. 25. [2] Compare 1 Cor. xv. 32 with 2 Tim. iv. 6, 7. [3] Apoc. ii. 17.

specimen of such tablets that has been found in the cemeteries. At least one example of bronze labels appended to the trappings of horses specially exempted from military conscription was found in the *loculus* of a Catacomb on the Via Appia. It bears the inscription LOLLIANI V . C . PRET TRIVMFALIS; and as the *prætor triumphalis* was instituted by Constantine in the year 331, and Lollianus was Consul in 355, the date of this tablet is fixed with unusual precision.

4.—Domestic Utensils.

Articles formed of stone.

The immense variety of articles of domestic use that have come to light in the Catacombs renders it somewhat difficult to classify them. De Rossi arranges them according to the material of which they are formed. Following this order, we may observe that besides the cameo and other precious stones already described under the head of personal ornaments, a quantity of little stone vases, plates, covers or bottoms of boxes, small caskets of sardonix and agate have been found in the Catacombs every now and then during the last 300 years. Many of these are preserved in the Vatican Library, and among them a number of beautiful little slabs of rock crystal, with figures of genii, peacocks, and other birds, and goats, with vines and foliage, and other subjects engraved upon them in *intaglio*. Padre Marchi found one of these crystal slabs sticking to a *loculus*, and on it were engraved *putti* and flower-wreaths. Boldetti publishes an engraving of a little crystal table with short feet. Fragments of pillars and bases of rock crystal are mentioned by Buonarroti among the objects in the Carpegna Museum found in the subterranean cemeteries. Several of these are now in the Museum of the Vatican Library, and among them a crystal figure of a boy standing on a globe. All these contributions to our Museums from the Catacombs in crystal and other precious stones are cut with a skill more or less classical, and in none of them is there any certain sign of Christian, still less of Byzantine art. One piece alone of

those in the Vatican might be supposed to bear a Christian signification. It is a fish engraved on a plain slab of crystal. No indication of a Christian design appears, but if such were intended, both the excellence of the style and the antiquity of the symbolism would place it among the very earliest specimens of Christian art.

Articles formed of marble and other stone, such as busts and heads and other parts of statues, were found by Boldetti among the rubbish in some of the Catacomb galleries, and have frequently been remarked by De Rossi in his explorations. The latter says, "I have seen in the cemeteries different fragments of small sculptured figures of ancient Roman design, in white, black, and coloured marbles, used as signs to mark graves; cornices of marble, especially red; and slabs of slate, with beautiful leaves and other decorative figures carved upon them, and inlaid with tarsia-work of marbles of various colours." Among this kind of work may be classed the beautiful monograms of Christ cut entirely out in *palombino*, with the interstices filled up with enamel. These are works of the fourth century, and a good example is the specimen lately found in the Cemetery of St. Agnes, with the inscription IN HOC SIGNO SIRICI . . . round the labarum of Constantine. The original, of which the woodcut on the next page is a reduced figure, is eight inches in diameter. The upper half of this fragment was discovered in 1872, and the inscription variously interpreted, until the other portion with IN HOC SIG supplying the true version was brought to light by the excavations made in 1875. Bits of enamel in various colours are still sticking to the upper part of the A and P. Small portable mosaics, sometimes on terra-cotta tablets, have been found used to close or to adorn the *loculi*. Traces of such mosaics occur especially in the Cemetery of Domitilla, and their fineness proves them to belong to a period earlier than the decline of art in the fifth century. A very fine head of our Saviour in sham mosaic was formerly preserved in the Vatican Library as

R.S., iii. 592.

Bullettino, 1872, 33, 35.

having come from the Catacombs, but is evidently a modern imposture. In the Cemetery of St. Agnes, in 1876, a *loculus* was discovered intact, with an epitaph in the style and character of the second century, and closing it was a marble slab cut out into a polygonal hollow, and forming a frame for the portrait of the deceased in enamel and other materials. Similar

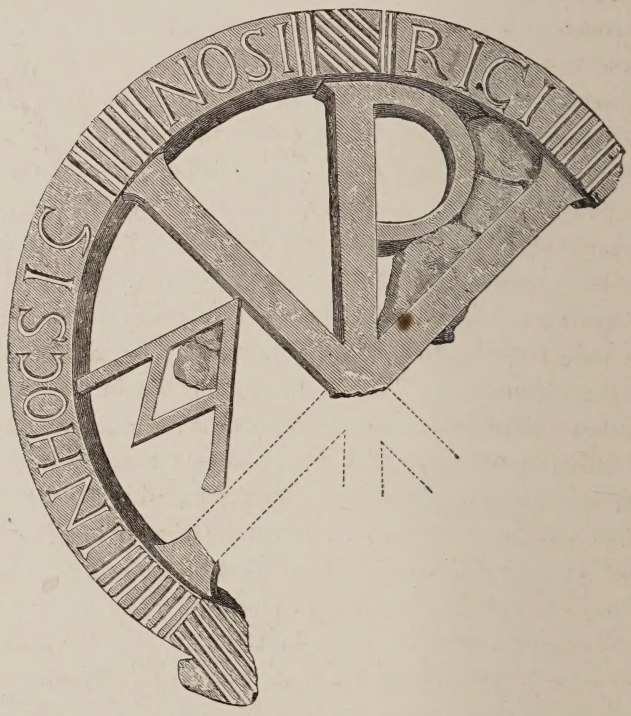


FIG. 109.—*Marble Monogram found in St. Agnes'.*

cavities, now empty, both round and square, may often be noticed in the sepulchral slabs even in the Cemetery of Callixtus. These cavities sometimes served to hold coins or medals. Buonarroti saw in the Catacomb of St. Agnes a medal of Julia Augusta embedded in the long marble slab of the tomb of one Chrisogenia, and adds, in his note upon it, that he found "the embedding of another smaller medal, and

a large oblong hole, which served perhaps for some piece of enamel or ivory, such as one finds generally walled up inside the tombs."[1]

Articles made of bone and ivory are more numerous than any other class of objects found in the Catacombs, especially if we add to them those formed of tortoise-shell, mother-of-pearl, and amber. The larger oblong slabs of ivory have served as covers to diptychs and writing-tablets; the small bits of all these materials probably served as ornaments to doors or household furniture, or formed the sides of boxes and caskets; round pieces have been the covers or bottoms of little boxes (*pyxides*) for holding perfumes, ointment, medicine, or for keeping jewels in. Some of these ivory and other vessels are elegantly carved into the shape of heads, faces of gorgons, and masks. Handles of knives, and sticks, and all kinds of weapons and other instruments held in the hand are made in the form of Hercules' club, of winged victories, and of apples. In the Vatican Library is an ivory needle-case and a slab of mother-of-pearl with an eagle carved on it, pierced with holes in order for it to be fastened with nails. This latter object was recently taken from the Cemetery of Callixtus by De Rossi himself. In the Cemetery of St. Saturninus there is still fastened in the plaster a little ivory statuette, much broken. It looks like Bacchus, gently leaning on his thyrsus, with his right hand raised above his head, and a panther at his feet. Ivory decorations in relief representing faggots, chests, little buildings, &c., are often found broken, and often only fragments of them sticking in the plaster. An immense ivory finger was seen by Padre Marchi in the Cemetery of Cyriaca. Boldetti says: "One sees in the cemeteries some very thin plates of ivory with *intagli* of exquisite workmanship upon them, like lace-work with foliage and fruit and such subjects, with divers names and letters cut out in the ivory; but in the attempt to detach them from the plaster their delicacy makes

Ivory and bone work. *R.S.*, iii. 593.

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 421.

R.S., iii. 594.

them break into little bits."[1] De Rossi adds: "I also have seen even now adhering to the plaster pieces of these very thin ivory plates carved in open work, and imitating the scales and lattice-work of the *transennæ* in the most elegant patterns of the third and fourth centuries." The testimony of Boldetti, the objects illustrated by Buonarroti, who engraves some fifteen ivories of mythological subjects from the Carpegna Museum, and modern experience, alike prove that the Catacombs have been, and are still, a rich mine of ivories and figured bone-work of Pagan art, while extremely rare are the instances of ivories of Christian workmanship, and these few are in a style anterior to the Byzantine period. The same may be said of the objects in amber and other material.

Covers of tablets and diptychs.

Ivory writing-tablets and diptychs were in constant use among the Romans, and the fashion by no means diminished but rather increased in the fifth century, and even after that. In fact, it was adopted by the Church as the usual adornment of liturgical books, especially the Gospels and the diptychs used in the Sacred Liturgy. Ivory pyxes were also used as ciboria for the Blessed Sacrament,[2] and also as reliquaries. Episcopal chairs, like the chair of St. Peter, and the furniture of nobles were ornamented with strips and plates of ivory. The celebrated chair of Maximianus, Archbishop of Ravenna, A.D. 549, is covered with ivory plates adorned with Biblical subjects. But among all the ivories found in the Catacombs, we see

R.S., iii. 305.

numerous specimens of tablet-covers, and plates engraved in ancient style, and yet not one sign of Christianity. The adjoining woodcut represents a portion of a diptych-cover, carved in good classical style, on a thin plate of ivory. It was found by De Rossi sticking to the plaster in the same gallery where the bone leopard was found. Of the consular

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 514.

[2] It may be interesting to the reader to remember that the ciborium preserved at St. Damiano, at Assisi, and which St. Clare held in her hands, when she confronted the Saracens, is composed of ivory.

diptychs[1] of the fourth, fifth, and sixth centuries, of the ecclesiastical diptychs of the same period, or of any other ivory plates adorned with Christian subjects, not even a fragment has been found in the Catacombs. The same may be said of ivory pyxes of Christian workmanship, of a similar character to that in the Vatican Museum, ornamented with Biblical subjects in relief.

Christian ivories.

R..S., i. 335, *tav.* xvii. 3.

FIG. 110.—*Ivory Cover of Diptych, found in Arenarium of Hippolytus.*

As yet the only articles in ivory, bone, or amber, with distinctly Christian ornaments which are known to have been found in the Catacombs, are five in number, and it is worth while to examine each separately.

1. The first is the ivory pommel of an arm-chair, found by De Rossi, with a coin fresh from the mint of Aurelian, in the plaster of a *loculus* in gallery *h* of the Cemetery of Lucina. This may confidently be assigned to the latter

[1] The consular diptychs are oblong plates of ivory, varying from 12 to 15 inches long, and from 4 to 6 inches wide, hinged together, with a slight depression of the surface inside to afford space for the layer of wax to be used for writing. The outside of each leaf was sculptured with mythological subjects. It was the custom of new consuls to present these diptychs to the senators, governors of provinces, and other eminent persons, and they contained the *Fasti Consulares*, or Acts of the Consuls, from L. Junius Brutus down to the donor, whose name or portrait was carved on the outside. Some specimens may be seen in the South Kensington Museum. They are of the greatest archæological value, since each specimen of ivory-carving thus bears its own date. Professor Westwood gives a catalogue of all those leaves that are now preserved, twenty-one in number, and woodcuts of two of them, one of A.D. 322, without any sign of Christianity, and the other of A.D. 505, with a bust of our Lord between the emperor and empress.—See Maskell's Art Handbook, No. 2. —*Ivories: Ancient and Mediæval*, pp. 21–31.

half of the third century. The pommel has somewhat rudely engraved upon it a sheep feeding, with the words HILARVS ZOTICENI CONIVGI, and we may suppose that the chair was a present from Hilarus to Zoticen his wife.

2. Another rare example of early Christian art is to be found among the ivories in the Vatican, and is figured in Padre Garrucci's edition of Macarius' Hagioglypta, p. 7. It represents a boat with three men in it, one of whom is drawing a net enclosing an enormous fish. One side of the boat has inscribed upon it the word ΕΥCΕΒΙ and the other acclamation ZHCAIC. This latter word seems to have been mistaken by Buonarroti for IHCVC, and those who, like Garrucci, have copied his engraving, have perpetuated the error. The whole stands on a pedestal of acanthus leaves, and forms a beautiful specimen of Christian art, which at latest cannot be assigned to a more modern date than the early part of the reign of Constantine.

R.S., iii. 595.

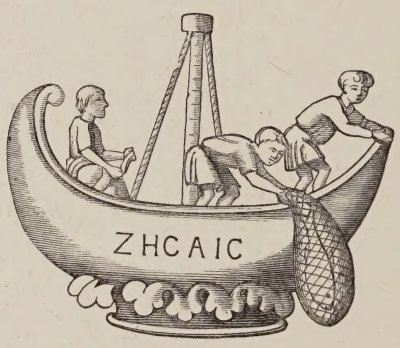


FIG. 111.—*Ivory Finial from the Catacombs.*

3. We have already mentioned the half-egg of ivory discovered and described by Boldetti. Raoul Rochette considers it a *tessera hospitalis*, but Marini, who saw it in the Strozzi Museum, pronounces it the memorial of a husband and wife. The style is that of the gilded glasses, *i.e.*, of the fourth century.

4. The same may be said of a nut made of amber, which opens, and discloses in one of the sections a bas-relief of Abraham offering up Isaac. This nut Boldetti found affixed to a tomb.[1]

5. The most important of the Christian ivories that have been

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 310. The engraving is on p. 298.

found in the cemeteries is the plate of ivory, described by Boldetti as found in the Cemetery of Callixtus, or rather of St. Domitilla, and now in the Vatican Library. Our figure of it is taken from Martigny, who traced it from the original. It represents our Saviour, not as a beardless youth, as in the more ancient frescoes and sarcophagi, but bearded, and in a conventional form, showing traces of Byzantine art. Still De Rossi considers it as probably belonging to the end of the fourth rather than to the fifth century. The nimbus is simple, not cruciform, and on the top of the head is the monogram with the cross erect.

FIG. 112.—*Ivory Plate from St. Domitilla.*

R.S., iii. 596.

These are all that are known to be Christian. Some three or four other ivories have been described by different authors as Christian; and among them we may mention a sketch of an ivory found in the Cemetery of Callixtus by Marangoni, in a MS. preserved in the Library of Oscott College, and representing a lady with a royal crown on her head and a palm in her right hand. But the sketch is too rough to enable us to determine the style and age of this ivory. It is therefore impossible to resist the conclusion, that the vast collection of bone and ivory work found in the Catacombs, even including the few examples of Christian art, belongs altogether to the first four centuries.

Articles formed of metal. Gold.

Passing on to objects formed of metal, Bosio writes: "It was not usual for the Christians of the primitive Church to place gold in their tombs, except such as was woven into the tissue of robes, or was in the rings which they had on their fingers, or else medals which they put in to mark the time when the burial took place, as we have seen in many monu-

ments in the sacred cemeteries."[1] De Rossi thinks that Bosio does not mean medals or coins of solid gold, but gilded medals, such as the one which has left some flakes of gold-leaf on the plaster of a *loculus* above the *arenarium* of Hippolytus. Medals overlaid with gold or silver belong for the most part to the third century. Boldetti, Padre Marchi, and De Rossi have all found pieces of gold tissue and gold thread in the *loculi*, but they have never come upon rings or other objects made of gold. If there ever were such articles, the greed of explorers has made away with them. Even when the cemeteries were in actual use, it would have been extremely difficult to prevent theft, and prudence would counsel the Christians to avoid offering such temptation to spoilers.

R.S., iii. 309.

Silver.

The same reason would apply to silver; nevertheless we have some examples of this metal being found in the Catacombs. Marangoni notices a silver spoon stuck outside a *loculus* of the so-called Cemetery of St. Saturninus. Boldetti, in forty years of labour in the Catacombs, found only one article of silver, and that was the head of a door-nail ornamented with a very beautiful rim of silver.[2] The silver bell mentioned above is the only piece of silver work that De Rossi has seen in the Catacombs.

Bronzes.

There is no such scarcity in the articles made of bronze. Bosio published engravings of many bronze lamps, but these belong to the next section. Sante Bartoli engraved a remarkable bronze statuette which he says was found "in the grottos of the holy martyrs." It represents St. Peter bearing the monogrammatic cross, a work of the fourth or of the beginning of the fifth century. Buonarroti saw in the Carpegna Museum "many Gorgons' heads, Jupiter Ammons, Bacchantes, scenic masks, and heads of lions which have served for heads of nails, ornaments of chairs, doors, and the like; and one is especially worthy of note which has a genius with a duck signi-

[1] Bosio, Rom. Sott., p. 21.

[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 509.

fying Winter."[1] He also mentions hollow balls pierced through which were horses' trappings. One of these is enamelled in red, blue, and green, and is now in the Vatican. Its style is of the third or fourth century. He describes a bronze shield, with the name of the owner AVRELIVS CERVIANVS, and of the legion XX . V . V, or *Valeria Victrix*, which is not found mentioned after the coins of Cerausius at the end of the third century. Another bronze described by Buonarroti as "found in the sacred cemeteries" is a large *discus* worked on both sides in relief, and representing the Good Shepherd, in the style of the third or fourth century. De Rossi has seen the impression of this *discus*, or of one like it, on the plaster in the Cemetery of St. Domitilla. *R.S.*, iii. 599.

Boldetti gives engravings of several bronze *bullæ*, and heads of nails worked into the forms of Medusa's heads, masks, and so on. He also furnishes us with examples of boxes, mirrors, tooth-picks, thimbles, *styli*, compasses, saws, keys, large signet seals, and other articles of domestic use in bronze or iron, none of which bear the least mark of Christian art or of a late period. The only Christian bronze found by Boldetti,[2] is the beautiful disk with the heads of the two chief Apostles, and which is represented in chromolithograph in Plate XXI. 1. This is the most ancient and classical monument remaining of the Apostles' portraits, and it cannot reasonably be ascribed to a more modern date than the second century, or the beginning of the third. Among all the variety of bronzes found in the Catacombs no examples have been recorded of those little bronze idols which are so common in Roman ruins.

In 1851, De Rossi saw in the Cemetery *Ad duas lauros* a circular plate of beaten work, about the size of a medal, with the heads of two emperors of the middle of the third century. It is in the Vatican Library, and Baron Visconti pronounces the emperors to be Tribonianus Gallus and Volusianus. In 1852, Padre Marchi picked up, in the Cemetery of Domitilla, *R.S.*, iii. 600.

[1] *Vetri*, p. xx. The engraving of it is on p. 426. [2] P. 192.

a small bronze plate on which was engraven a minute figure of Roma seated with a globe, and victory in her hand. The impressions of similar figures in relief on bronzes are frequently to be seen on the plaster of the *loculi* in the different cemeteries, and all testify to the style of art being classical or at least of the first four centuries. One of these represents the sacrifice of Isaac in the style of the fourth century, and was seen by De Rossi in a gallery connecting the anonymous area with the great necropolis of St. Callixtus. In the Cemetery of St. Saturninus he saw the impression of a large disk with the emperor M. Aurelius (?) in his triumphal car, crowned by Victory. Among all these bronzes no trace has been found of the works of the barbaric invaders of the Roman provinces in the fifth century, and no remains of the metal work of Merovingian art, so common in the ancient Cemeteries of France.

Glass and enamel work. *R.S.*, iii. 601.

We come now to articles formed of glass and enamel. The ancient Romans were accustomed to decorate the walls of their rooms with strips of glass imbedded in them. Pieces of blue and green enamel, and glass medallions, and bits of coloured glass strips are often found sticking in the plaster of the *loculi*. Sometimes they are variegated, or covered with arabesques, or ornamented with flowers and foliage, or figures of fish and other animals. A remarkable disk cut out of a plate of glass, painted with fruit and fish in such a manner that the painting is on one surface and is looked at through the thickness of the glass, was found about four years ago in the so-called Cemetery of St. Saturninus, where it still remains fixed in the plaster of a *loculus;* perhaps the only example remaining of the kind. *Bullæ* and studs of glass are found of the same style and belonging to the same period as those already described among the bronzes. Fragments of small plates and vessels of vitreous composition and enamel are found most abundant in the Cemeteries of Priscilla and Pontianus as in the Etruscan tombs. These green and blue

Bullettino, 1873, 21; *tav.* iii., *n.* 1.

enamels seem to have begun to go out of fashion about the middle of the third century, when white glass, turned and cut by hand with great delicacy, became the favourite mode of decoration. Figures in *intaglio*, letters in relief, and different ornaments in gold-leaf, or little figures attached to the surface of the vase by very fine rivets of glass, became popular in the third and fourth centuries, and fragments of these are more common in the Catacombs than the enamelled glass. The gilded glasses, as will be seen from the chapter devoted to their description, belong to the third and fourth centuries.

Singular glass bowl. *R.S.*, iii. 326–330.

Among other specimens of glass found in the Catacombs, we may call particular attention to a very remarkable example found by De Rossi, in 1869, in the triangular tract of galleries which connect the ancient *area*, marked II. in the large Plan, with the central region of the Cemetery of St. Callixtus. The gallery is marked 5 on the Plan; and in the plaster in the corner of a *loculus* in that gallery was found the glass bowl represented in Fig. 113. The portion here represented was entirely imbedded in the plaster, and has been most skilfully detached and cleaned by Padre Tongiorgi, formerly Curator of the Kircherian Museum. The other portion which stood out from the *loculus* has been destroyed by the ruthless barbarism which has worked such havoc in the Catacombs. The bowl is in the form of half an egg, and is of white glass. Three shells of the same material form its feet, and its surface is ornamented with three bands of shells and fishes standing out in high relief. The lowest band, representing the bottom

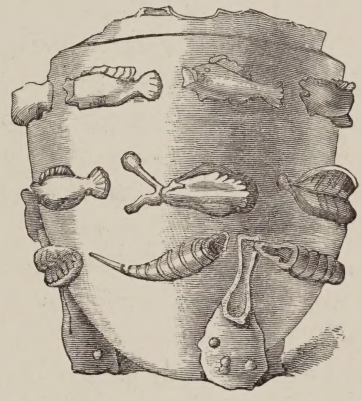


Fig. 113.—*Glass Bowl found in St. Callixtus'.*

of the sea, is composed of shells; the middle band is formed of soles and such fish as usually dwell near the bottom; while the upper band is made up of fish of the kind that prefer to swim near the surface. The middle band of fishes are tinted light blue, and so is the rim of the bowl. When this specimen was first brought to light, it was the only example known either in Pagan or Christian art of this kind of glass. In 1875, however, Canon von Wilmowsky discovered, in an ancient Christian cemetery at Trêves, a glass bowl decorated in almost exactly the same manner; the chief difference being the absence of colour, and the somewhat greater freedom of the treatment of deep-sea fish. For further information about this kind of glass and its manufacture, we must refer the reader to the pages of De Rossi.[1] It is sufficient to remark here that it belongs to the category of *diatretæ*, and the seat of the manufacture was on the banks of the Rhine, and not in Rome. The period of its being in vogue was from the end of the third century to the middle of the fourth. The Christian cemeteries afford very few examples of *vitreæ diatretæ*, and hardly one of glass engraved with Christian figures *in intaglio*, although this kind of glass has been found elsewhere, even in Rome among ruins of the latter part of the fourth and fifth centuries. Of glass, with Pagan figures engraved upon it, the examples are numerous in the Catacombs, and still more frequent are the instances in which the plaster of the *loculi* still retains the impression of glasses which have once been there.

R.S., iii. 603.

Glass Phials.

Bullettino, 1873, 20.

Some of the glasses found in the Catacombs have letters in relief stamped upon them, and marks of the factories where they have been made. In a gallery of a portion of a cemetery on the Via Salaria Nuova, belonging to the latter part of the third century, De Rossi found two cups of white glass, with a circlet of Greek letters in relief, bearing the acclamation: ΠΙΕ ΖΗCΑΙC, ΠΙΕ ΖΗCΑΙC ΕΝ ΑΓΑΘΟΙC, "Drink, and long life

[1] These two bowls are represented in chromolithograph in *R.S.*, iii. tav. xvi.

to you; drink, and long life to you among the good." M. Detlefsen[1] had collected all the accounts he could find of square or hexagonal phials of flat glass, most of them with long and narrow necks, which are stamped on the bottom with the seal of the glass factory, or perhaps of the perfumer who used them. The chronological dates furnished by this inquiry mark a period embracing the first three centuries of the empire. P. Bruzza has added two examples, probably of the fourth century. The phials of this kind found in the Roman Catacombs have been discovered in galleries belonging to exactly those first three centuries.

Terra-cotta amphoræ. *R.S.*, 605.

Most of the articles in terra-cotta found in the Catacombs come under the head of articles properly belonging to tombs, such as lamps and lacrymatories. Still, there are certain pieces of terra-cotta which do not fall under that category. The large *amphoræ* used for wine or oil are frequently to be met with in the cemeteries, especially in and near the *arenariæ*. The *Agapæ* of the *Ecclesia fratrum* required ample provision of corn and wine and oil, and the *arenariæ* served as cellars and granaries. In the *Gesta apud Zenophilum*,[2] is an account of a domiciliary visit paid by the municipal officers at Cirta, by Diocletian's orders in 303, *ad domum in quo Christiani conveniebant*, and where they found the bishop and his clergy, and among them several *fossores*. The officers made an inventory of the articles delivered up to them, among which they enumerate *dolia* iv et *orcæ* vi.[3]

[1] *Revue Archeol.*, Sept. 1863, p. 217.

[2] Alluded to and quoted by St. Augustine in his Donatist Controversies. It is printed in the Appendix to the Donatist Treatises.

[3] The inventory is interesting and runs thus :—

"Two golden chalices: *item*, six silver chalices, six silver cruets, a silver bowl (*cucumellam*); seven silver lamps, two wax-candlesticks, short brass candlesticks with their seven lamps: *item*, eleven bronze lamps with their chains: 82 women's tunics, 38 veils (*mafortea*), 16 men's tunics, 13 pairs of men's stockings, 47 pairs of women's stockings, 19 countrymen's belts (*coplæ rusticanæ*)." They continued their search for the sacred books, and found the cupboards in the library empty, but one of the fossors brought out a

Of these *amphoræ* only one has been found bearing any mark of Christianity. This is in the Lateran Museum, and has on the neck the impress of a seal with the words SPES I / N DEO

Terra-cotta plates.

We may divide terra-cotta into ornamental work of fine art, and the common pottery of domestic use. The first comprise the Etruscan vases (*Vase Arretine*), and their imitations, with the factory marks stamped upon them. Of these there are very few specimens in the Catacombs. In fact M. Detlefsen[1] believes their manufacture to have ceased in the second century. Of other ruder kinds of pottery there is no lack of examples, especially in the form of lamps. Now and then some sign or symbol of Christianity appears on pots and platters of terra-cotta,—the jewelled cross with a dove above it, the Agnus Dei with A ☧ Ω on its neck on two fragments in the Vatican Museum, which appear to be of the fifth century,—but there is no proof of their having come from the Catacombs. Little terra-cotta figures have been already mentioned among the children's toys, but figures of other kinds are not so

R.S., iii. 607.

common as might have been expected. The explanation seems to be that Roman terra-cotta figures in the first four centuries were usually idolatrous subjects, and therefore unfitted for Christian cemeteries. Slabs of terra-cotta *bassi-relievi* so frequently used in architectural decoration during the first three centuries are sometimes found in the Catacombs used for closing the *loculi*. De Rossi found one of these, with the consular date of 273 upon it, in the Cemetery of Prætextatus. The sculpture is somewhat rude, and represents sheep in

silver capital of a pillar, and a silver lamp, which he said he had found behind a butt. The officers pursued their search, "and when the *triclinium* was opened there were found four jars and six butts (*dolia* iv. *et orcæ* vi.). The Donatist asserted that Felix of Aptonga had said to the officers of Diocletian : "Take the key, and the books that you find in the cathedral (*cathedra*), and the MSS. on the stone, take them away ; but take care that the officials do not take away the corn and oil" (*Appendix ad Optat*).

[1] *Loc. cit.*, p. 228.

various attitudes among trees.[1] Possibly the Good Shepherd may have been on the portions now lost. It is impossible to assign a date to ordinary pots and pans, but it is safe to affirm that no certain example of terra-cotta work of more recent date than the fourth century has been found in the Catacombs.

5.—Coins and Medals.

Coins and Medals *R.S.*, iii. 570.

It would not be a fair inference to draw from the coins and medals found sticking in the plaster of the *loculi*, or lying in the grave, that the dates of the burial corresponded with that of the coin. Buonarroti records the discovery, in a cemetery near St. Agnes, around one single tomb, of more than ten medals of different emperors, and belonging to widely-different periods;[2] coins of Gordian and Severus Alexander (five or six on a string), one of Trajan, one of Severus, and one of Otacilia.[3] At the same time, when a medal or coin displays the sharply-cut characters of having come fresh from the mint, there is a probability of its having been placed in the *loculus* shortly after its coinage; and when several coins of the same, or nearly the same, date are found in one *loculus*, it is reasonable to suppose that they were current at the time that they were placed there. Even putting aside these considerations, the coins and medals, taken as a whole, cannot but furnish some chronological limits to the period during which the cemetery in which they are found was used for burial.

In St. Callixtus. *R.S.*, iii. 571–574.

In the great necropolis of Callixtus, De Rossi has taken note of coins and medals, either still sticking or leaving their impressions in the plaster, of Domitian, Caracalla, Severina (wife of Aurelian), two impressions of the reverse medals of emperors of the third century whose names are not given, of Diocletian, Maximian, Maxentius, and Constantine. Also among the earth have been picked up some thirty

[1] *Inscriptiones*, tom. i. n. 12. [2] *Vetri*, p. xi.
[3] *Medaglioni*, p. 421.

bronze coins, among which are one of Philip the Younger, two of Claudius (the conqueror of the Goths), one of Probus, two of Maximian, one of Constantius the Elder, one of Licinius, the majority of Constantine and his sons, and one of Valentinian the Elder. Bosio mentions his having found in this cemetery one medal of Caracalla, one of Diocletian, and a remarkable medal inlaid with ivory, which may have been of Constantius II., Magnentius, or Decentius. The famous Carpegna collection, illustrated by Buonarroti, contained medals of emperors and empresses from Hadrian to Constantine, and lastly, Decentius, who was Cæsar in the year 351. Most of these are said by Boldetti to have come from the cemeteries of Callixtus (Domitilla) and St. Helena. Buonarroti testifies[1] that, "Not many medals of Maximianus, Diocletian, or Galerius are found in the sacred cemeteries, because under them was the most fierce persecution that the Church had." Every trace of coins or medals in St. Callixtus has been carefully examined by De Rossi, and yet not one example has been found of the fifth century. Hence, we may safely conclude that the coins and medals of the subterranean Cemetery of Callixtus are comprised within the limits of the first four centuries. The Christian devotional medals of the fifth century have been described by De Rossi, yet no trace of these has been seen in the Catacombs.

Bullettino, 1869, 33–45.

6.—Articles properly belonging to Christian Tombs.

Lamps

R.S., iii. 609.

The use of lamps, both to illuminate the sepulchral chambers and to honour the dead, was common both among the Pagans and among the Jews from the earliest times. From the Synagogue the custom passed into the Christian Church. The *olea* carried by the Abbot John to Queen Theodelinda in the sixth century testify to the practice of burning lamps before the shrines of the Saints in the Catacombs. But while some of the lamps found in the Catacombs may have been placed

[1] *Medaglioni*, &c., p. 384.

there by the devotion of pilgrims long after the disuse of the Catacombs for burial, and others may have been brought there simply for the purpose of giving light in the galleries and chambers, those found within the graves or stuck in the plaster in such a position that they could not have been used for lamps belong to the same category as the other objects treated of in this chapter. The bronze lamps hung from chains, described by Bosio and Boldetti, cannot be ascribed with certainty to the time when the Catacombs were used for burial. These would be likely to be removed after the Catacombs were abandoned, but not so the terra-cotta lamps, which were of no value.

of bronze,

A peculiar form of lamp is occasionally found in the Catacombs, in which a hollow tube of terra-cotta rises up from a saucer of the same material, like our flat candlesticks. These were intended to hold wax candles; and a whole series of such candlesticks were found by P. Marchi stuck in little niches along the walls of a gallery in the Cemetery of Cyriaca; and on the rim of one of them was engraved, in letters of the end of the third or beginning of the fourth century, the acclamation: FELICIO CAECIDEL E VIVAS. But the ordinary form of the Catacomb lamps so well known has but one wick; now and then there are two; and De Rossi has come across one example of a lamp with four wicks. These lamps are found in great quantities. In one single chamber in St. Callixtus, which had been already visited and plundered frequently, De Rossi found more than forty of them. They are found in Europe, Asia, and Africa; but until the fifth and sixth century Rome appears to have been the great centre of their manufacture. They are found among the ruins of all ancient buildings both within the city and near the cemeteries; a considerable number were brought to light in the recent excavations in the Coliseum. A few years ago Cav. Guidi found some hundreds of them on the Aventine, all marked with Christian symbols of the fourth and fifth centuries. The

of terra-cotta in various forms,

great number

with Christian symbols.

most ancient lamps made in Roman potteries with Christian symbols are those of the factory ANNI SER, many of which have the figure of the Good Shepherd crowned with grapes and vine leaves. It is impossible to determine who this Annius Servianus (?) was, but the pottery is of the best style of the second century. It is found in ancient palaces in Rome, Ostia, &c., and was found by Bosio in the Catacombs. De Rossi himself found a lamp with this mark in St. Domitilla. Many other factories of Christian times produced lamps, more or less rude, with animals (sometimes symbolical, sometimes not), fishes, birds, quadrupeds, reptiles; with palm trees and palm branches, vases, shells, and very rarely ships. Very many of these have the monogram or signs of the name and cross of Christ. The crosses are, in some instances, jewelled, and even sometimes on a staff. Biblical subjects are not frequent on these lamps; and when they occur, are of the rudest kind, and testify to a period about coeval with the Gothic kingdom. An evident type of the fifth or sixth century is one of Christ trampling upon the asp, the basilisk, the lion, and the dragon. The portraits of the Apostles are more ancient, and some bear the likeness of the emperors and empresses of the fifth century.

Bullettino, 1867, 15; 1870, 80–84.

R.S., iii. 615.

Now, in the Cemetery of Callixtus, De Rossi has observed that the greatest number of lamps are quite plain, without any symbol at all; some have rude figures of animals, symbolical or indifferent, or else a shell. Not a few have the monogram , some the monogrammatic cross , but not one has the jewelled cross, or any other emblem or trace of the factories of the middle of the fifth century, and later. This is not an isolated case, for De Rossi avers that, during more than thirty-five years of observation, upon the multitudes of lamps that have come under his eyes, only one cross with a staff has been seen by him, and that in the great vestibule of the Cemetery of Domitilla, discovered in 1865. Three little lamps with jewelled crosses have been lately found in the Cemetery of

Generally plain, *R.S.*, iii. 613.

Ostrianus. In the interior of the galleries, he does not remember one example of a lamp with a cross upon it; and of other lamps of the style of the fifth and sixth centuries, he has certainly never seen a single instance, while he has frequently come across lamps with the monogram in both forms— and . An examination of the writings of Marangoni, Bartoli, Boldetti, and Bosio lead to the conclusion that, when they speak of lamps with the cross upon them, they mean the monogram.

and of ancient type.

On the other hand lamps of more ancient form and workmanship have been seen and described by these writers. Le Blant has observed that the lamps of the fourth and later centuries have the handle solid, while those of earlier and more classical times have the handle perforated, often in elegant shapes. Sometimes lamps of distinctly Pagan design are found in the Catacombs. De Rossi found one with a figure of Venus on it, apparently of the fourth century. The early Christians do not seem to have had much scruple in using utensils with Pagan emblems upon them.

Ampullæ. *R.S.*, iii. 616.

Both in the Christian subterranean cemeteries and in those in the open air we find little vases and *ampullæ* of glass and terra-cotta of various forms, placed for the most part in the tomb, and near the head of the deceased. In the Middle Ages it was customary to place a little vessel of holy water in the tomb, but we have no ancient authority for supposing this to have been the case in the first five or six centuries; so that Bosio's conjecture as to this being the purpose of the little vases in question cannot be established. Some of them, doubtless, have once contained blood of the martyrs, but these shall be examined in a future chapter. We are, at present, examining their form rather than their contents, in order to determine, as far as possible, their antiquity. As may be seen from the engravings in the works of Bosio, Aringhi, and especially of Boldetti, these *ampullæ* are found in forms of the utmost variety. A visit to the Christian

Museum in the Vatican Library, or to the Kircherian Museum at the Collegio Romano, or to the store of relics at the Cardinal Vicar's palace will show us the originals in still greater variety. Glass balsam-pots, often called lachrymatories; ointment bottles of the shape called *alabastrum* and *guttus*, sometimes in stone or enamel; *ampullæ* in the form of masks, little barrels, fish, pomegranates; *paterœ*, *calices*, *canthari* or *scarabæi*, *scyphi* and every sort of drinking-cup; flasks, sometimes covered with straw, like Florence-flasks now for wine or oil, little amphoræ, and other wine bottles of every pattern are to be found among them, but all are of ancient types, and such as come from the imperial potteries of the first four centuries. In 1829, a small bronze pail with its handle was found near a *loculus* in the Cemetery of St. Hippolytus. Kettles and basins of bronze, like those found at Pompeii, were in 1852 brought to light in a chamber of the Cemetery of St. Agnes (Ostrianum), and are now in the relic-room of the Cardinal Vicar. De Rossi thinks it not unlikely that these utensils may have been used for the *agapæ*. Now if these vessels be compared with the vases found in the Franco-Gallic or the German tombs of the Merovingian era, it will be seen that the latter are of a much ruder and quite different workmanship from these Catacomb vases; while the Gallo-Roman vases of the fourth century are of the same character as these which we are now describing.

R.S., iii. 620.

The late Abbé Cochet, Inspector of Historical Monuments of the Seine-Inférieure, gives, in "*La Normandie Souterraine*," numerous illustrations of the pottery found in the Gallo-Roman Cemeteries at Cany, Dieppe, Fécamps, &c.; and also of the Franco-Merovingian tombs at Londinières, Envermen, and other places. The former are simply Roman of the first four centuries. The latter have a totally different kind of decoration, "all is essentially barbarous, and is evidently the style of the Carlovingian and Anglo-Saxon manuscripts. Even if in some of them the form and lightness reveal the ancient

model, yet in others we remark a thickness and clumsiness that we never see in the Gallo-Roman pottery, however common."[1]

We have selected at random from the above work a group

FIG. 114.—*Specimens of Gallo-Roman Glass and Pottery. Fourth Century.*

FIG. 115.—*Specimens of Merovingian Pottery and Glass. Sixth or Seventh Century.*

of specimens of each kind of pottery and glass work, and our readers can see at a glance the great difference between the two styles.

Bosio, Aringhi, and Boldetti have described various instru- Instruments of Torture.

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 231.

ments of torture, found inclosed in the *loculi* of the martyrs. De Rossi himself found in a tomb under the floor of a chamber near the crypt of St. Cecilia a large hollow ball of brass filled with lead, and attached to a bronze chain, and also one like it of smaller size. Even supposing the larger one to have been the weight of a pair of scales, still there are examples in the Acts of the Martyrs of these weights being used as instruments of torture. The ancient Acts often mention the fact of the *plumbatæ* and other instruments of torture having been purchased by the faithful, and carefully deposited with the martyr's body in the grave. Bosio found "in the head of a martyr firmly fixed the iron of a hatchet."[1] The learned archæologist Olivieri writes: "When I was a youth in Rome, there was extracted from one of the cemeteries (I forget which) the body of a holy Martyr, whose thighs and legs were missing, but running through his skull was a nail a palm and a half long, and two other similar nails among the ribs of his breast. This remarkable relic was deposited by my uncle, Mgr. Olivieri, in the Pontifical Sacristy on Monte Cavallo."[2] De Rossi himself says, "Many times even in our own days have we had the opportunity of seeing and handling the material proofs of the mutilations and various tortures undergone by those buried in the Roman Catacombs; and of the religious care of the ancient Christians in gathering up all that they could of the mangled bodies, and the mutilated limbs, and depositing them in an honoured place, and wrapping them in precious coverings." At the same time he is very careful to observe that it would be rash to regard as instruments of torture all the sharp-pointed articles found in the *loculi*. For instance, a bronze *stylus* was found a few years ago apparently sticking in the skull of a woman, but it was probably only a hair-pin. Nails were sometimes placed in Pagan tombs for certain symbolical reasons, and a similar explanation may sometimes account for their presence in

R.S., iii. 622.

[1] Rom. Sott., p. 21.

[2] Memorie di S. Terenzio, p. 101.

Christian graves. Some bronze claws (*ungulæ*) were long preserved in the Christian Museum at the Vatican, and have been engraved by Perret and others, but they really came from a Pagan Etruscan tomb.

We have now briefly passed through the various classes of objects found in the Catacombs, with the exception of the gilded glasses, to which we devote a separate chapter. We shall then be in a position to inquire into the purpose for which these objects were placed in the Catacombs, and also to weigh the chronological value of the whole mass of these various objects as affording an indication of the period during which the Catacombs were used as places of burial.

CHAPTER II.

GILDED GLASSES FOUND IN THE CATACOMBS.

Gilded Glasses in various Museums—Description of them—Their manufacture and date—Subjects depicted on them: Pagan, social and domestic, Jewish, but most frequently Christian—Description of some of them—Christ, the B. Virgin, the Saints—SS. Peter and Paul: a very frequent subject—Their Feast at Rome—Ancient portraits of these Apostles—St. Peter under the type of Moses on glasses, sculpture, and paintings, proofs and illustrations of this—Remarkable glass recently brought from Dalmatia—Large patenæ with small medallions let into the glass, example found at Cologne—Glass chalices—Use of glass patenæ.

Gilded glasses.

WE have reserved a separate chapter for the gilded glasses found among the various objects adhering to the plaster of the *loculi* in the Catacombs, because they are almost exclusively Christian in their design and workmanship, and thus differ from the greater part of the objects among which they have been found. Unfortunately in many cases no record has been preserved of the localities from which they were taken. The largest collection of them is in the Christian Museum in the Vatican Library. Smaller collections may be found in the Kircherian Museum at the Roman College, and in the Museum of the Propaganda. The British Museum possesses about thirty specimens, the Museums of Paris, Florence, and Naples, not so many. Among private collections, Mr. C. W. Wilshere's in this country is probably one of the best; it contains about twenty specimens, the more important of which are at present in the Loan Collection of the South Kensington Museum.

Description of glasses found in the Catacombs.

These glasses are, the greater part of them, evidently the bottoms of drinking cups. Their peculiarity consists in a

design having been executed in gold-leaf on the flat bottom of the cup, in such a manner as that the figures and letters should be seen from the inside, like the designs on the glass bottoms of the ale tankards so popular at Oxford and Cambridge. The gold-leaf was then protected by a plate of glass, which was welded by fire so as to form one solid mass with the cup. These cups, like the other articles found in the Catacombs, were stuck into the still soft cement of the newly-closed grave; and the double glass bottom, imbedded in the plaster, has resisted the action of time, while the thinner portion of the cup, exposed to accident and decay by standing out from the plaster, has in almost every instance perished. Boldetti informs us that he found two or three cups entire, and his representation of one of these is given in Padre Garrucci's work.[1] Even the bottoms of these glass cups have frequently perished in the attempt to detach them from the plaster, and the impression left in the cement is often all that remains to show the loss sustained by Christian archæology.

Their discovery by Bosio and others in Roman Catacombs.

The discovery of these glasses is coeval with that of the Catacombs themselves. Bosio found five or six fragments of them during all his researches on the Via Appia and Via Ardeatina, and then found an equal number of whole unbroken specimens in a single gallery on the Via Salaria; and when Aringhi published the drawings and descriptions of these, he added an account of a few others that had been discovered since. Buonarroti's work contains an account of about seventy specimens, which were all that were known in his time. Boldetti added about thirty more. Padre Garrucci, however, has obtained accurate drawings of all the specimens now extant in the various museums of Europe, so that in his publication we have a full collection of about 340, twenty of which, however, only exist in the pages of Boldetti, Olivieri, and other authors. Modern exploration has not brought to light many new specimens. In the course of thirty-three

[1] Vetri ornati di figure in oro.—Tav. xxxix. nn. 7 a, 7 b, first edition.

Two found at Cologne.

years of labour in the Catacombs, De Rossi has only come upon four fragments, and two or three have been brought to light by the excavations recently made at Ostia. Until 1864 not a single specimen had been discovered except in the neighbourhood of Rome, but in that year a very remarkable fragment of a gilded glass plate was found at Cologne in excavating the foundations of a house near the Church of St. Severin; and in 1866 another, though of a different workmanship, was discovered, together with some charred bones, in a rough stone chest about thirty inches in length, and fifteen in width and depth, in a similar excavation near the well-known Church of St. Ursula and her companions. This last specimen is now in the Slade Collection in the British Museum; and a woodcut of the other is given in page 320.

The art of making them known only in Rome;

These two exceptions scarcely seem sufficient to overthrow the general opinion of archæologists that Rome was the only place where this kind of glass was manufactured. Garrucci has, indeed, adopted a further conclusion, and considers the art to have been confined to the Roman Christians. It is, however, exceedingly improbable that the Christians should have been acquainted with any ornamental art which was unknown to their Pagan contemporaries. Besides, several of the figures represent gladiatorial combats and scenes from Pagan mythology, such as no Christian artist of the early ages would have thought of depicting, nor can either the figures or the inscriptions which accompany them be in any way adapted so as to bear a Christian signification. Buonarroti, in his work on the glasses,[1] gives engravings of three glasses of much more elaborate workmanship, in which the glass has been cut, and the gold-leaf has been carefully coloured and shaded, and sometimes silver is used instead of gold. These are all family groups, representing a boy GERONTIVS, a man named SITTACVS, and CERICIA his wife, and a carefully-drawn portrait of a man and his wife with their little boy in front of them. There is

[1] Osservazioni, &c., Tav. xxv.

nothing to show that these specimens are Christian, except, perhaps, the absence of the *nomen* and *cognomen* in the two first. How, then, it may be asked, are we to account for the fact of these glasses scarcely ever having been found except in Christian sepulchral crypts? We acknowledge the fact, but deny the inference; for it is no less a fact that these glasses have never been discovered in any Christian building or sepulchre *above ground*, and yet we know that from very early times, and more especially after A.D. 312, the Christians possessed many places of burial which were not subterranean. That no such glasses have come down to us from antiquity, except those found in the Catacombs, is to be ascribed to their extremely fragile nature, which the peculiar circumstance of their having been imbedded in mortar alone preserved from destruction. Cavedoni conjectures, with much probability, that vessels of glass thus ornamented have been destroyed in great quantities for the sake of the gold which they contained, and this conjecture is confirmed by one or two instances recently found, in which some of the gold-leaf has been scraped away with an instrument forced in between the plates of glass.[1] The Jews, "dealers in broken glass," who plied their trade in Trastevere, even in the days of Martial,[2] may have had some share in producing the scarcity of specimens of this kind of manufacture.

Bullettino, 1864, 82.

It is difficult to determine precisely the period to which these glasses are to be assigned. Olivieri discovered one in the Cemetery of St. Callixtus, "in the middle of which was represented a heap of money, and in the centre of the heap, on the top of all the rest, was to be distinguished the head of Caracalla."[3] Another glass bears the name of Marcellinus, who was martyred under Diocletian in A.D. 304.[4] From an

and practised in the third and fourth centuries.

[1] Cavedoni, Osservazioni, &c., p. 6, &c., quoted in *Bullettino*, 1864, p. 82.

[2] Transtyberinus ambulator,
Qui pallentia sulphurata fractis
Permutat vitreis.—*Epig.* i. 42.

[3] Garrucci, Tav. xxxiii. n. 5.

[4] Ib., Tav. xix. n. 3.

examination of the style of dress, and of the mode of arranging the hair, as also from the orthography of the legends and other indications, Padre Garrucci considers them all anterior to the time of Theodosius; and De Rossi speaks more precisely, assigning them to a period ranging from the middle of the third to the beginning of the fourth century. Professor Babington, in Smith's Dictionary of Christian Antiquities (GLASS), has refuted the late Mr. Wharton Marriott's supposition, that these glasses were made in the sixth century. We do not consider it necessary to notice Mr. Parker's speculations about their origin and date.

Subjects depicted on them.

The subjects depicted on them are more varied than those painted on the walls of the Catacombs. A few are, as

Pagan.

we have already mentioned, scenes from Pagan mythology: Hercules, Achilles, and Pagan gods and goddesses. Others represent boxers contending for the prize, charioteers, and hunting scenes; a shipbuilder with his men variously employed; a money-coiner, a tailor, and a druggist, each in his

Social and domestic.

shop. Domestic scenes from the nursery and the schoolroom are also here to be met with; a father and mother, with one or more of their children in front of them; or still more frequently, a husband and wife, standing side by side, sometimes with hands joined over the nuptial altar, which is generally presided over by Christ, either represented by His monogram , or else in His own Person crowning the married couple. In one instance, it seems to be an angel instead of Christ, who is assisting at the union; but it is quite possible that this may be a Pagan scene, and the winged figure may be intended for Cupid. Five or six specimens

Jewish.

exhibit the seven-branched candlestick, the ark containing the rolls of the law, and other Jewish symbols; but the great majority are manifestly Christian.

Most frequently Christian.

Three of these, of which two are in the possession of Mr. Wilshere, have one or two figures in the centre, and, grouped around these, a number of subjects from Holy Scripture.

Thus in one,[1] in the Kircherian Museum, we have Christ with the rod of power changing the water into wine; Tobias with the monster fish; Christ with the rod of power enabling the paralytic to carry his bed; and lastly, with the same rod of power protecting the Three Children in the flaming furnace of Babylon. Another, now in the possession of Mr. Wilshere,[2] has the Apostles Peter and Paul in the centre, and the six compartments around them contain successively figures of the

Description of some of these.

FIG. 116.—*Gilded Glass representing Marriage.*

Three Children; a man supposed by Garrucci to be the prophet Isaias, with a roll of a book taken out of a chest, and a symbolical figure of the sun; then a female figure praying, possibly the Virgin, whose maternity the prophet saw in vision; next a man, probably the prophet Isaias, being sawn asunder by two executioners; then another man with a rod and a serpent in front of him, probably Moses and the brazen serpent, which our Lord tells us was a type of Himself; and

[1] Garrucci, Tav. i. n. 1.

[2] Ib., *loc. cit.*, n. 2.

lastly, Moses striking the rock. This and the following glass may be seen in the South Kensington Museum.

The third, of which we give a representation, has in the centre a man and his wife, with the legend PIE ZESES, *Drink, and long life to thee.*[1] Around this family group are arranged the Scripture subjects of the fall of Adam and Eve, the sacrifice of Abraham, Moses (or Peter) striking the rock,[2]

FIG. 117.—*Gilded Glass with Biblical Subjects.*

the paralytic carrying his bed, and the raising of Lazarus. Between each of these groups appears the figure of Christ with the rod of power in His hand. If we may venture to interpret the series as a whole, we see here sin, represented by the fall of our first parents, but the remedy promised at

[1] See p. 308, note.

[2] This is clear from the other glass in the South Kensington Museum.

once; the sacrifice for sin, typified by Isaac; absolution, under the symbol of the paralytic to whom it was said, "Son, be of good heart, thy sins are forgiven thee;" and the complete deliverance from death the wages of sin, foreshadowed in the resurrection of Lazarus.

These and other Scriptural subjects, such as Noe in the Ark, the sacrifice of Isaac, the destruction of the dragon by Daniel, and the history of Jonas, are found sometimes singly, and sometimes together. Our Lord is frequently represented as the Good Shepherd, or as multiplying the loaves, or changing the water into wine; but in this latter miracle the number of water-pots is invariably represented as seven instead of six, apparently to signify that the symbolical meaning of the miracle as a type of the Holy Eucharist was principally in the artist's mind.

Figures of Saints.

The Blessed Virgin is represented sometimes alone, with her name over her head, praying between two olive trees; sometimes with the Apostles Peter and Paul on either side of her;[1] sometimes accompanied by the virgin martyr St. Agnes. St. Agnes is found on several glasses with similar variations.[2] Other Saints, as SS. Lawrence, Vincent, Hippolytus, Callixtus, Marcellinus, Sixtus, Timotheus, &c., are found more rarely. But the favourite subject is evidently the representation of the two great Apostles SS. Peter and Paul.

FIG. 118.—*Gilded Glass in the Louvre Museum.*

Feasts of SS. Peter and Paul

Those who have passed a summer in Rome will not easily forget the enthusiasm with which the Romans still keep the *festa* of their great patrons. Even the vast Basilica on the

[1] See Plate XXII. 1.

[2] Plate XXII. 2.

Vatican appears full of citizens in gala dress, when they listen with proud satisfaction to the glorious hymn :

> " O felix Roma ! quæ duorum Principum
> Es consecrata glorioso sanguine,
> Horum cruore purpurata cæteras
> Excellis orbis una pulchritudines."

at Rome in fourth century.

The sermons of St. Leo the Great, and the poems of Prudentius, show us with what solemnity the festival was observed in the fourth and fifth centuries. " The people flock together," sings the latter, " for more than ordinary joys. Tell me, my friend, what this may be? They run to and fro through the whole of Rome, and shout for joy, because to us this festal day of the Apostles' triumph has come again, this day ennobled by the blood of Peter and of Paul." [1] These festivities were then, as now, apt to run into excess, and hence St. Jerome, while thanking Eustochium for her childish presents of sweetmeats, adds the caution, " It is the feast and birthday of Blessed Peter . . . and therefore we must take all the more care that we keep this solemn day not so much with the abundance of our food, as with the gladness of our souls. For it is very absurd to propose with over-eating to honour a martyr, who you know pleased God by his fasts." [2] St. Augustine laments the dishonour done by scenes of riot to the Saints, " whom drunkards now persecute with their cups, as much as the furious Pagans used to pursue them with stones ; " [3] and he specially mourns over the scandal given by the wine-bibbing in " the Basilica of St. Peter," [4] where *agapæ* were celebrated in the portico for the benefit of the poor. Paulinus of Nola tells us how the *agapæ* thus degenerated, how " the table of Peter receives what the teaching of Peter denounces," and at the same time he draws a graphic picture of a *festa* in the fourth century. " Among the crowds

[1] Peristeph. xii.
[2] Ep. xxxi., ad Eustochium.
[3] Enarr. in Ps. lix.
[4] Ep. xxix., ad Alypium, § 10.

attracted thither by the fame of St. Felix," he says,[1]—and with one alteration we may fairly transfer his description to Rome on the 29th of June,—"there are peasants recently converted who cannot read, and who, before embracing the faith of Christ, had long been the slaves of profane usages, and had obeyed their senses as gods. They arrive here from afar, and from all parts of the country. Glowing with faith, they despise the chilling frosts;[2] they pass the entire night in joyous watchings; they drive away slumber by gaiety, and darkness by torches. But they mingle festivities with their prayers, and after singing hymns to God, abandon themselves to good cheer. They joyously stain with odoriferous wine the tombs of the Saints. They sing in the midst of their cups, and by their drunken lips the devil insults St. Felix. I have therefore," continues the good bishop, "thought good to enliven with holy pictures the whole temple of St. Felix. It may be, when the sight of them strikes their astonished minds, these coloured representations will arrest the attention of the rustics. Inscriptions are placed above the pictures, in order that the letters may explain what the hand has depicted. While they point them out to one another, and read by turns these pictured objects, they forget their eating till a later hour. The enjoyment of the sight beguiles their hunger, better habits are formed in these gazers, and studying these sacred histories, chastity and virtue are engendered by such examples of piety. . . . And as they spend the day in gazing more and more, their potations become less frequent, and only a short time remains for their repast."

Figures of SS. Peter and Paul in glasses.

Whether the same idea of restraining the potations of the Roman Christians, by depicting figures which could only be seen to advantage when the glass was empty, suggested the

[1] Poema xxvi. (*aliter* xxxv.); De Felice, Natal., carm. ix. v. 541, *seqq.*

[2] The *contadini* who spend the vigil of SS. Peter and Paul on the steps and under the colonnade of the Piazza di San Pietro are not in danger of frost.

use of these gilded cups, we shall not pause to inquire. It is at any rate certain that the feast of SS. Peter and Paul was observed as a general holiday in Rome during the fourth century, very much as Christmas is now amongst ourselves, and the representation of the two Apostles on eighty glasses out of the three hundred and forty published by Garrucci, is a strong argument of their having been intended in some way or other to commemorate that day. The inscriptions, where they occur, with the figures of the Apostles, confirm this supposition, for they are all of a convivial character. We give a few examples—DIGNITAS AMICORVM PIE ZESES CVM TVIS OMNIBVS BIBAS. DIGNITAS AMICORVM PIE ZESES CVM TVIS OMNIBVS BIBE ET PROPINA. CVM TVIS FELICITER ZESES. These may be translated—"*A mark of friendship,*[1] *drink,*[2] *and* [*long*] *life to thee, with all thine. Mayest thou live* [*long.*"] "*A mark of friendship, drink, and* [*long*] *life to thee, with all thine, drink* [or, *live*] *and drink to my health.*" "*Mayest thou live happily with thine own,*" or, more freely, "*Life and happiness to thee and thine.*" A more religious inscription has:—HILARIS VIVAS CVM TVIS OMNIBVS FELICITER SEMPER IN PACE DEI ZESES, that is, "*Joyfully mayest thou live with all thine; happily mayest thou live for ever in the peace of God.*" Doubtless in Rome many a pious pilgrim followed the practice which St. Monica learned in Africa, of whom St. Augustine records, with the playful fondness of filial affection, that she

[1] DIGNITAS AMICORVM appears to have been equivalent to the phrase *Digni amici*, with which a Roman host was accustomed to pledge his guests before drinking their health. Perhaps it would have been more exactly rendered by "*Here's to our friendship.*" The phrase is evidently alluded to by St. Augustine in the passage quoted below, where *dignationem* stands for the honour paid to the Saints by St. Monica with her cup of wine. The same word is often used by Tertullian, St. Cyprian, and other African writers.

[2] PIE, ZESES, for πιε, ζησῆς, Greek words in popular use in Rome. BIBAS may be understood as it stands, or as written for VIVAS. The latter is more in conformity with the spelling on the inscriptions in the Catacombs, in which VIXIT is usually written BIXIT.

used to bring to the festivals "a small cup of wine, diluted according to her own abstemious habits, which for courtesy she would taste (*unde dignationem sumeret*). And if there were many shrines of the departed Saints to be honoured in that manner, she would carry round that one same cup which she used everywhere; and this, even when it had become not only very watery, but unpleasantly lukewarm, she would distribute to those about her by small sips, for she sought their devotion, not pleasure."[1] De Rossi inclines to the opinion that these glasses served for these purposes at the tombs of the Apostles.

Ancient portraits of these Apostles

A question here naturally arises as to the representations of the Apostles, how far they may be considered to be real likenesses, or whether they were purely conventional, invented and perpetuated merely by Christian art. We have seen the testimony of Eusebius that he had "seen representations of the Apostles Peter and Paul, and of Christ Himself, still preserved in paintings.[2] St. Augustine says that people "in many places used to see them (Peter and Paul) represented in pictures with Christ. For Rome, in a specially honourable and solemn manner commends the merits of Peter and Paul on account of their having suffered on the same day."[3] St. Ambrose, in his account of the vision which he had of SS. Gervasius and Protasius, adds that there appeared "another third person, who seemed to be like Blessed Paul the Apostle, whose countenance I had learned from pictures."[4] Moreover, it cannot be denied that there is a certain uniformity of type about the figures of these Apostles on most of the glasses of which we are speaking, so that they might often be distinguished, even if there were no legends over their heads.

on bronze medallion.

The oldest representation of them now extant is probably

[1] Conf. vi. 2.

[2] Hist. Eccl., vii. c. 18.

[3] De Consens. Evang., i. 10.

[4] Cujus me vultum pictura docuerat.—Epist. 53.

that on a bronze plate preserved in the Vatican Library.[1] This medallion is about three inches in diameter; it is cut with a die or with a hammer, and finished with a chisel. De Rossi says: "It is certainly a work of a classical type, and of a style rather Greek than Roman. In order to determine with more or less exactness the date of so rare and unique a monument of the likenesses of the Apostles, one would be obliged to produce some similar bronze-work of Pagan art, and of a certain or approximately-known date; or else to place it side by side with the plastic works of the second or third century, to one of which centuries our bronze undoubtedly belongs. . . . It is enough to say that to every eye, practised in the study of the monuments of Pagan and Christian art in the third century, it is evident that this bronze is not more modern than about the time of Alexander Severus." De Rossi contrasts with it a mutilated fragment of a bronze plate of about the same size, which is of immensely inferior workmanship, and which he assigns to the fourth century. Buonarroti[2] gives a representation of a medal of M. Aurelius and L. Verus with busts of the two emperors in exactly the same attitudes as the Apostles here, with the consular date of A.D. 162, but inferior in style to the medallion under consideration. Professor Babington has hazarded the conjecture "that the style of the medal bespeaks the age of the Renaissance; it is most probably of the fifteenth century, or thereabouts."[3] We think he would not have ventured to express this suspicion had he remembered that Boldetti[4] himself extracted this bronze from the Catacomb of Domitilla, and that De Rossi has seen the impressions of similar medallions in the plaster of *loculi*. The portraits on this bronze are very lifelike and natural, bearing a strong impress of individual character. One of the heads

Bullettino, 1864, 85.

[1] See Plate XXI. 1.

[2] Osservazioni sopra Medagl, tav. iv. 2.

[3] Dict. of Christian Antiquities (GLASS), p. 733, note.

[4] Osservazioni, p. 192.

PETRUS

is covered with short curly hair, the beard clipped short and also curled, the features somewhat rough and commonplace. The features of the other are more noble, graceful, and strongly marked; the head is bald, and the beard is thick and long. This valuable medal confirms the tradition preserved by Nicephorus[1] of the personal appearance of the two Apostles, the first being that of St. Peter, and the latter that of St. Paul; and, as we have already said, these characteristics

FIG. 119.—*Gilded Glass with Heads of SS. Peter and Paul.*

are in the main retained in most of the glasses, excepting a few which are of very inferior execution. The two Apostles are represented side by side, sometimes standing, and some- variously represented on glass,

[1] See also St. Jerome, Comment. in Ep. ad. Galat., i. 18, tom. vii. p. 329, ed. Migne. It is a curious coincidence also that in the apocryphal Acts of the Apostles, edited by Tischendorf, it is said of Dioscorus, the ship-master, who had followed St. Paul to Rome, and was mistaken for the Apostle and beheaded in his stead, that he was bald, "καὶ αὐτὸς ἀναφαλαντὸς ὑπάρχων," p. 4.

times seated. In some instances Christ is represented in the air (that is, from heaven, as it were), holding over the head of each a crown of victory; or, in other instances, a single crown is suspended between the two, as if to show that "in their death they were not divided." This crown becomes sometimes a circle surrounding the labarum or , which is often supported on a pillar, thus symbolising "the pillar and ground of the truth," which is "that very great, very ancient, and universally-known Church founded and organised at Rome by the two most glorious Apostles Peter and Paul."[1] For there certainly seems to be good ground for Mr. Palmer's conjecture,[2] that in some of these glasses the Roman Church is intended to be symbolised in the persons of her founders and patrons, rather than the Apostles themselves to be represented personally. In this way we can account for their being placed on either side of the Blessed Virgin,[3] of St. Agnes, or of other Saints, who have their hands uplifted in prayer, whilst the Apostles are not in the same attitude, and moreover, are made to appear of very diminutive stature. It can never have been intended to represent St. Agnes as superior to the chiefs of the Apostles, or as making intercession for those who had "finished their course" more than two centuries before her. Rather, we understand St. Agnes, St. Peregrina, and the rest, even our Blessed Lady herself, as praying for the Roman Church which these Apostles had founded, and through it for the Church at large. St. Agnes was always accounted a very special ornament and glory of the Roman Church, and we have certain proof of the Roman Christians of the fourth century asking her prayers, in the inscription by Pope Damasus, still to be seen at the entrance of her church *fuori le mura*:—

sometimes symbolical of Roman Church.

[1] St. Irenæus, Hær. iii. 3.

[2] Early Christian Symbolism, p. 21. While these pages are passing through the press, this accomplished scholar, learned antiquarian, and most kind friend has departed this life. *Requiescat in Pace!*

[3] See Plate XXII. 1.

MARIA
PAVLVS
PETRVS

AN G NE

UT DAMASI PRECIBUS FAVEAS PRECOR, INCLYTA VIRGO.

"I pray thee, O noble Virgin, to listen favourably to the prayers of Damasus."

She was also represented alone[1] upon these glasses almost more frequently than any other Saint excepting the two Apostles of whom we have been speaking.

St. Peter under the type of Moses;

The relative positions of these two Apostles, in ancient works of art, have been a subject of frequent discussion ever since the days of St. Peter Damian. It seems impossible, however, to establish any theory upon them. St. Peter is generally at the right hand, but by no means always so; and if any one attempts to prove from this that the Roman Christians looked upon the two Apostles as in all respects equal and co-ordinate, he is met by the fact;—First, that our Lord Himself is found once standing on the left of St. Paul; St. Agnes, too, in the place of honour, where she appears with the Blessed Virgin; and husbands, often placed on the left of their wives: moreover, that Pagan artists, when they placed Jupiter between Juno and Minerva, observe the same indifference as to the relative position of the two goddesses; and that the Seal of the Papal Bulls to this day represents St. Peter on the left hand. And secondly, that the primacy of St. Peter is distinctly attested in some of these glasses by another symbol which can hardly be misunderstood. We mean those in which he appears under the type of Moses striking the rock. The rock, of course, at once suggests the passage of St. Paul: "They drank of that spiritual rock that followed them, and that rock was Christ;" but we should hardly have ventured to affirm that the figure striking the rock was St. Peter, if his name had not, in two instances at least, been unmistakably given at his side. One of these glasses has been long known to antiquarian visitors to the Vatican Museum,[2] and within the last few years a second, preserved in the same place, but whose

Bullettino, 1868, 43.

[1] See Plate XXII. 2.

[2] See Plate XXII. 2.

surface had become corroded and opaque, has been cleaned and rendered transparent by Professor Tessieri. It does not differ in any essential respect from the other, yet there is just sufficient difference to indicate the hand of another artist.

The glasses explain the paintings and sarcophagi.

These invaluable glasses supply us with a key to many of the paintings in the Catacombs and sculptures on Christian sarcophagi, where the same scene is so frequently repeated. They show us that St. Peter was considered to be the Moses

FIG. 120.—*Bottom of a Gilded Glass found in the Catacombs, and lately cleaned and restored to the Vatican Museum.*

of "the new Israel of God," as Prudentius speaks, and they explain the reason why the rod, the emblem of Divine power, is never found except in three hands, those of Moses, Christ, and Peter. It belongs primarily, and by inherent right, to Christ, the eternal Son of God. By Him it was of old delegated to Moses, of whom God testified, "He is most faithful in all My house."[1] For a few years the rod of power was

[1] Num. xii. 7; compare Heb. iii. 5, 6.

visibly wielded by the Incarnate Word; and when He withdrew His own visible presence from the earth, "afterwards," to use the words of St. Macarius of Egypt,[1] "Moses was succeeded by Peter, to whom is committed the new Church of Christ, and the new priesthood." We understand, also, that it is not without reason that in the sarcophagi the figure striking the rock is almost invariably found in immediate juxtaposition with the prince of the Apostles led captive by the satellites of Herod Agrippa, and there is frequently a studied similarity in the features of the principal figure in both scenes. Perhaps the most striking example of this is to be found in a sarcophagus of the fourth century, a photograph of which forms the frontispiece to this volume, where the likeness between the two figures is unmistakable. Mr. Parker, from whose collection of photographs this is taken, describes it thus: "St. Peter striking the rock, and bringing out the Stream of Life, at which the Jews are drinking. The arrest of St. Peter."[2] Another example may be seen in the large sarcophagus which stands at the end of the principal hall in the Lateran Museum. In one of the four compartments into which the front of that sarcophagus is divided, we have an epitome of St. Peter's life. First, he stands with the rod of power, already given to him by his Divine Master, who is warning him of his fall, symbolised by the cock at his feet. Next, he is taken prisoner by the satellites of Agrippa, but he still bears the rod, for "the Word of God is not bound," and no worldly violence can wrench the rod of jurisdiction from him to whom Christ has given it.[3] Lastly, he appears under the symbol of Moses,

also in sculpture on sarcophagi,

[1] Hom. xxvi. c. 23. St. Bernard speaks of the Pope as "primatu Abel, gubernatu Noe, patriarchatu Abraham, ordine Melchisech, dignitate Aaron, auctoritate Moyses, judicatu Samuel, potestate Petrus, unctione Christus." *De Consid.*, lib. ii. 8.

[2] Parker's *Funereal Sculpture*, Plate XIX.

[3] There must have been some special cause for the frequent repetition of this scene. The most reasonable explanation is that St. Peter's imprisonment and miraculous deliverance, after which "he went into another place" (Acts xii. 17), was the occasion of his coming to Rome, where the same

using the rod to bring from "the Spiritual Rock" the streams of grace, at which the Israel of God slake the thirst of their souls; or, to use the words of St. Cyprian, "It is preached (by this eloquent stone) that the Jews, if they thirst and seek after Christ, shall drink together with us, that is, shall obtain the grace of Baptism."[1]

and in frescoes in Catacombs.

We have already seen that the same idea runs through the paintings in the earliest *cubicula* of the Catacombs. All sacramental grace is there represented as flowing from that one stream over which Peter presides. Early in the fifth century, St. Augustine expressed the same idea when, writing to Pope Innocent I., he said, "We do not pour back our streamlet for the purpose of increasing your great fountain, but we wish it to be decided by you whether our stream, however small, flows forth from that same Head of rivers whence comes your own abundance."[2] And in his reply the Pope says of St. Peter, "from whom the very Episcopate, and all the authority of this name (of the Apostolic See) sprung . . . that thence all other churches might derive what they should order; whom they should absolve; whom, as bemired with ineffaceable pollution, the stream that is worthy only of pure bodies should avoid; just as from their parent source all waters flow, and through the different regions of the whole world the pure streams of the fountain well forth uncorrupted."[3]

In the glass in the Vatican Library, of which Fig. 121 is a representation, with the lost fragment supplied, the lower portion represents the Lamb standing upon Mount Sion (Apoc. xiv. 1), from whence, as from Paradise, flow forth the four

scene was enacted again and again in the apprehension and martyrdom of so many of his successors. The parallel event in the life of St. Paul (his imprisonment and deliverance at Philippi) is nowhere reproduced in early Christian art. See Palmer's "Symbolism," p. 18.

[1] Epist. lxiii. 8.

[2] S. Aug. Epist. clxxvii. vol. ii. p. 938, ed. Gaume.

[3] Inter Epist. S. Aug. 181; ib. p. 949. See Note A. in Appendix II. to Vol. I., on the *Chair of St. Peter*, and its connection with the Baptismal Font in the Vatican, Vol. I. p. 490.

J. Burkhardt Lith.

Evangelical streams, which unite in the mystical Jordan (IORDANES), the waters of Baptism. On either side of the Lamb of God are the faithful, Jews and Gentiles, coming forth from the two cities, Jerusalem (IERVSALE) and Bethlehem (BECLE). These two cities appear in the mosaics of St. Maria Maggiore, SS. Cosmas, Damian, and Mark. In the mosaic placed by Celestine I. in St. Sabina, the Apostles

FIG. 121.—*Gilded Glass in Vatican Library.*

SS. Peter and Paul are represented with a woman under each—*ecclesia ex circumcisione*, and *ecclesia ex gentibus*—a pictorial version of Gal. ii. 7–9. The apse of the Basilica of St. Felix of Nola must have been decorated with a similar scene, for St. Paulinus describes it thus :—

> " Petram superstat ipse Petra Ecclesiæ,
> De qua sonori quatuor fontes meant,
> Evangelistæ viva Christi flumina."

This symbolism was perfectly familiar to the Christians of the third century. Thus St. Cyprian writes to Julianus (Ep. 73): "The Church setting forth the likeness of Paradise, includes within her walls fruitful trees. . . . These trees she waters with four rivers, that is, with the four Gospels, whereby, by a celestial inundation, she bestows the grace of saving Baptism." The upper part of the glass represents Christ standing on the mountain of glory, at the foot of which the Jordan flows in seven streams, and giving commission to St. Peter, with the cross, the sign of his martyrdom, and to St. Paul. The palm-tree, the symbol of fruitful life, rises behind each Apostle as the result of his labours, with the Phœnix standing at its summit, the Clementine symbol of the Resurrection.[1]

Glass Plate from Podogoritza.

Bullettino, 1877, p. 79, &c.

A striking confirmation of the interpretation of the symbol of Moses as a type of St. Peter is supplied by a large glass plate brought by M. Basilewsky from Podogoritza, the ancient Doclea in Dalmatia, and described by De Rossi with an engraving of the exact size of the original. The plate is $9\frac{1}{4}$ inches in diameter, of white transparent glass, scratched with rude figures representing Scriptural subjects arranged in a circle round a central group of Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac, somewhat after the fashion of the gilded glass in Fig. 117. We have Daniel with a lion on each side of him, and the words DANIEL DE LACO LEONIS (*Daniel from the lions' d.n*); then the Three Children, with the title, TRIS PVERI DE *i*GNE CAMI*no* (*Three Children from the furnace of fire*); next a woman with her arms extended in prayer, and the legend, SVSANA DE FALSO CREMINE (*Susanna from the false accusation*); then comes a boat, from which Jonas has been thrown, and swallowed by a monster, who gazes at him under the gourd, with the words DIUNAN DE VENTRE QVETI LIBERATVS EST (*Jonas from the whale's belly was delivered*). Then we have the fall of our first parents, with the words ABRAM ET FI [*lius—Adam et*] EVAM (*Abraham and his Son—Adam and*

[1] See above, p. 56.

Eve). The resurrection of Lazarus follows, with the words, DOMINVS LAZARVM (*The Lord* [*raises*] *Lazarus*).

Finally, we have the following scene traced from De Rossi's engraving, with the legend in cursive characters, which De Rossi has deciphered thus: *Petrus virga perquodset, fontis ciperunt quorere*,—that is, *Petrus virga percussit, fontes cœperunt currere*—"Peter struck [the Rock] with the Rod, and the streams [of grace] began to flow." The rudeness of the drawing makes the rock look more like a tree, but the legend leaves no room for doubt about the meaning. De Rossi has Cursive writing.

FIG. 122.—*Part of Engraving on Glass Plate from Podogoritza.*

not yet given to the world his judgment as to the exact date of this precious relic of antiquity, which the archæological zeal of M. Basilewsky succeeded in rescuing from Serajevo just at the commencement of the Eastern war, but he is justified in saying: "This testimony which comes to us from the East of Illyricum, sets the seal with dazzling clearness to the truth of the Moses-Peter, whom the Roman monuments had first revealed to Padre Marchi of illustrious memory."

Among the glasses delineated by P. Garrucci may be noticed a great number of very small size. These had been supposed to belong to glass cups of small dimensions; but a careful Large *patenæ* with small medallions let into the glass.

examination of them, especially since the discovery which we have mentioned of the fragments of a glass plate at Cologne, has proved that they once formed parts of similar *patenæ*. It

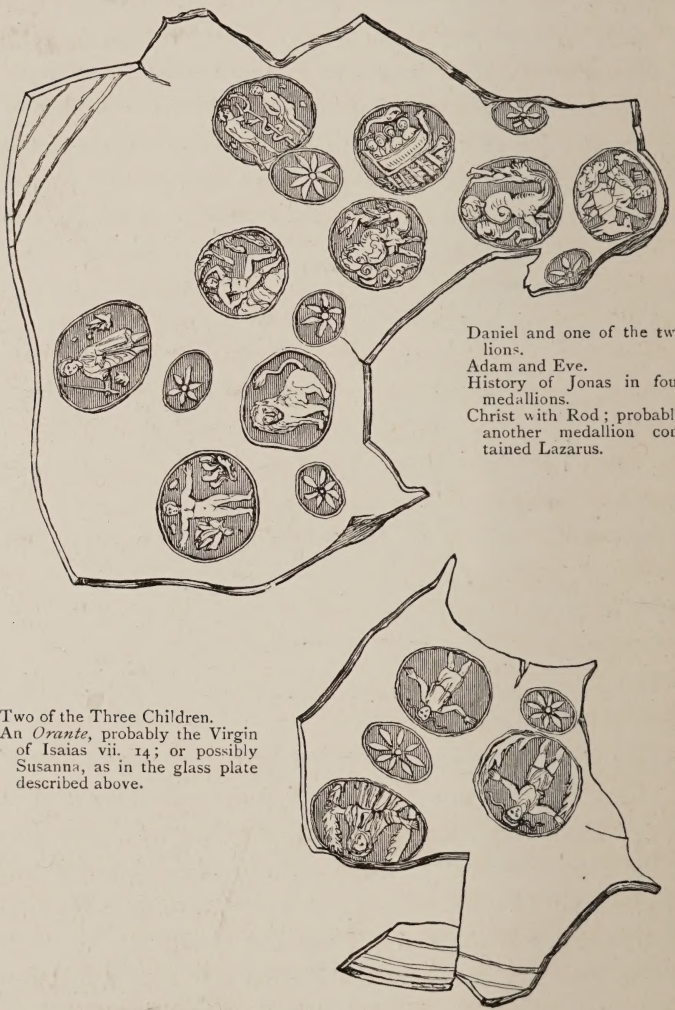

Daniel and one of the two lions.
Adam and Eve.
History of Jonas in four medallions.
Christ with Rod; probably another medallion contained Lazarus.
Two of the Three Children.
An *Orante*, probably the Virgin of Isaias vii. 14; or possibly Susanna, as in the glass plate described above.

FIG. 123.—*Fragments of a Glass Patena found at Cologne.*

will be observed that they rarely contain a whole subject at once. Thus one of them will contain the figure of Adam,

another that of Eve, while the tree and the serpent coiled round it will be represented on a third. The Three Children are each on separate glasses, while our Lord is represented about a dozen times standing alone with a rod in His hand, while on other glasses are to be seen the paralytic carrying his bed, Lazarus as a mummy at the door of his sepulchre, and the rock with the stream issuing from it. It is true that sometimes these small glasses have been taken out of the series to which they belong. Thus, one published by Garrucci in Tav. iv. 9, which is in the Vatican, was found in the plaster round a child's grave, in the Cemetery of St. Priscilla, surrounded with a circle of iron with a ring by which it had been hung round the neck as a medal; and yet the subject is one of the three Magi. But the general use of these small glasses is proved by the fragments discovered at Cologne, of a flat plate about ten inches in diameter made of clear glass, into which have been inserted, while in a state of fusion, a number of small medallions of green glass exactly similar to those found separately in Rome, and which together form a series of Scriptural subjects. These medallions, being of double glass, have resisted the ravages of time and accident which have destroyed the more thin and fragile glass of the *patena*. De Rossi has seen in the plaster of *loculi* in the Catacombs the impression of large plates of this description, which have probably perished in the attempt to detach them from the cement. *Bullettino*, 1864, 89–91.

We have alluded to the probable use of these glasses at the *agapæ*, and the subjects on many of them suggest their having been also used on other festive occasions, as marriages, birthdays, &c. It is, however, a more interesting question to consider whether it is not possible that some of them may have been used as patens or chalices in the celebration of the Holy Eucharist. The well-known passage in which Tertullian scoffs at the Roman Pontiff for painting on his chalice the figure Glass chalice.

of the Good Shepherd,[1] would lead us to suppose that the chalices of the second and third century must have been frequently of similar material and workmanship to the glasses of which we are treating. The celebrated *Graal* or *Sacro Catino*, preserved at Genoa, which is supposed to have been the chalice used by our Saviour at the Last Supper, and in search for which so many romantic adventures were encountered by legendary knights, is of glass, and of hexagonal form; but it would not be safe to deduce any archæological argument from so doubtful a relic.[2] The *Liber Pontificalis* says of St. Zephyrinus, that "he made it a constitution of the Church, that ministers should carry *glass patens* into the Church in front of the priests, while the bishop celebrated mass with the priests standing before him, and that in this manner masses should be celebrated, care being taken for what belonged to the rights of the bishop, that the clergy only should take away for all present the Holy Loaf (*coronam*) consecrated by the bishop's own hand, and that the priest should receive It to administer It to the people." About twenty years afterwards, St. Urban "made the consecrated vessels all of silver, and set apart twenty-five silver patens." From these notices later writers, such as Honorius of Autun, have affirmed that "the Apostles and their successors celebrated masses in wooden chalices; Pope Zephyrinus in glass; but Urban, Pope and martyr, ordained that the Holy Sacrifice should be offered in gold or silver chalices and patens."[3] The passages, however, do not bear out so absolute a limitation of the period of glass chalices to the few years between Zephyrinus and Urban. It is not said that the latter Pope forbade the use of chalices of less precious materials; it is merely stated that he provided sacred vessels of silver, and especially a number of patens

[1] "Ipsæ picturæ calicum vestrorum, si vel in illis *perlucebit* interpretatio," &c.; and again, "pastor quem in calice depingis."—*Tert. De Pudicit.* 7–10.

[2] See Didron, Christian Iconography, vol. i. p. 270, note (Bohn's trans.)

[3] De Gemma Animæ, i. 89.

corresponding to the number of the city *tituli*. The history of St. Sixtus II. and St. Laurence shows that the treasures of the Church were constantly liable to confiscation, and it would have been as impossible to ensure the sacred vessels being always of the precious metals in Rome during the ages of persecution, as it is now for those Christian communities which groan under the bondage of Mohammedanism.[1] When happier days came, and the munificent gifts of gold and silver chalices displaced the glass vessels, it was not at all unlikely for some of the latter to be put up as tokens of affection and distinction on the tombs of the departed, and hence it is quite possible that some of our glasses may be fragments of chalices.

Glass *patenæ* and their use.

The *patenæ vitreæ* which St. Zephyrinus required, belong to a different category. They were not for the use of the celebrant bishop or priest; but, in conformity with that ancient practice which required all the priests in cathedral cities on Sundays and great festivals to assist at the bishop's mass, St. Zephyrinus ruled that the priests of the several *titles* should be attended on such occasions by a minister with a glass *patena*, in which a requisite number of consecrated hosts (made then in the form of the Roman circular biscuit *ciambella*, and hence called *corona*[2]) should be placed at the bishop's mass, and taken by the priests to be administered to the faithful in the different parishes, who thus signified their union with the bishop by "being all partakers of that one Bread" consecrated by his hands. "Take heed," says St. Ignatius of Antioch, "that you have but one Eucharist. For there is one flesh of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and one chalice in the unity of His blood. One altar, as there is but one bishop, with the priests, and the

[1] The present writer once received a visit from a Coptic priest, who begged earnestly to have given him for a chalice one of the ale-glasses which he saw on the table of the Nile-boat saloon. Glass chalices are universal throughout Egypt in the Coptic churches.

[2] See above, Fig. 99, p. 250.

deacons, my fellow-servants."[1] Now, the fragments of the two large *patenæ* discovered at Cologne, correspond exactly to the kind of glass paten here mentioned. The Scriptural subjects, and the absence of any allusions to secular feasting, accord well with so sacred a purpose, and we may therefore fairly presume that those other smaller glasses which we have mentioned may also be remains of the *patenæ* used to convey the Blessed Sacrament from the Pope's altar to the parish churches in Rome. Padre Garrucci thinks this not improbable, although he does not admit that any of our Catacomb glasses ever formed portions of Eucharistic chalices. The *patena* found near the Church of St. Ursula differs from the other discovered two years before, in having the subjects depicted in gold and colours on the surface of the glass, instead of being within medallions of double glass. The drawing is also in a better style of art.

[1] St. Ign. ad Philadelph. c. 4; compare ad Smyrn. c. 8:—"Let that be deemed a sure Eucharist which is [administered] either by the bishop, or by one to whom he has entrusted it."

CHAPTER III.

PURPOSE AND CHRONOLOGICAL VALUE OF THESE VARIOUS ARTICLES.

Purpose for which these articles were placed in the Catacombs—Theories of Severano, Boldetti, Marangoni, and Buonarroti—Untenable theory of Raoul-Rochette—Buonarroti probably correct in thinking these objects sign-posts—Pagan ornament on them accounted for—Chronological value of these articles—Conclusion of De Rossi.

Theories about the Objects.

THE immense variety of the articles found in the Catacombs, and the little connection which the greater part of them have with funereal purposes leads us to inquire, What purpose was intended by those who placed them in these subterranean galleries? Severano, the editor of Bosio's great work, Boldetti, and Marangoni, regard them simply as ornaments of the graves, and testimonials of affection from the living to the dead. Buonarroti considers them principally as sign-posts, so to speak, by which the particular *loculus* might be identified by friends who wished to visit the last resting-place of their beloved one; and adds that the Christians "took anything that came to hand, or that they found in the house, without reflecting what sort of thing it was, whether Pagan or Christian, whole or broken, or rather they preferred broken articles and of small value, since they were lost and could serve for nothing else."[1] Raoul-Rochette, on the other hand, maintains that the sepulchres of the ancient Egyptians, Asiatics, Greeks, Etruscans, Italians of every race, and Romans, prove that they used to furnish the abodes of the dead with the same articles that he loved when living, and that the Christians

[1] Vetri, p. xi.

continued the same practice.[1] Cavedoni, in opposition to the ingenious French *savant*, has fallen into the exaggeration of attempting to prove the Christian symbolism of almost every article found in the Catacombs. De Rossi considers that the opinion of Buonarroti is the nearest to the truth, and shows strong reasons against the theory of Raoul-Rochette.

Raoul-Rochette's theory untenable.

The great difference between the pagan and the Christian furniture of the tomb was this; that the pagans used to arrange the various articles within the tomb, or on little tables or brackets around the dead, as if for his use and convenience, whereas in the Christian cemeteries these articles are found stuck in the plaster outside, so as to strike the eye of the living, rather than to serve for the use of the dead. Buonarroti cites two stones which record the *signum loci*,—ZINNVM LOCI, and the TITVLV(*s*) marked with the *signum navem*,—SIGNV(*m*) NABE(*m*), with a ship carved upon it. The same learned author also points out the strange variety of these articles, many of them having no possible connection with the associations of life or things dear to the deceased, and quantities of them being in fragments and mere rubbish taken by chance, evidently without any special intention. We cannot judge of the mass of these objects by the engravings published by Boldetti of those which are the least injured. The sight of the broken bits of every kind, fixed in the plaster in exactly the same way as the comparatively perfect specimens, is far more convincing as to the purpose for which they were placed there.

The recently discovered Cemetery of Generosa, most of the *loculi* in which are still intact, furnishes us with one of the best examples of this mode of distinguishing particular graves. Some have fruit-stones stuck in the plaster, some twigs and leaves of trees and plants, the impressions of which still remain, others have tusks and teeth of quadrupeds, or bones

[1] See *Troisième Mémoire sur les Antiquités Chrétiennes des Catacombes*, par Raoul-Rochette. Paris. 1838.

of animals; snail-shells, oyster-shells, very rarely used to make an ornamental cornice as in the *nymphæum* of a private house, but generally singly and irregularly stuck in without any attempt at an ornamental pattern. Such were the ordinary means used by the ancient Christians, at the time of burial when the cement was still moist, to mark the graves of their friends. Now and then, as we have seen, more precious objects were used for the same purpose, and in the case of children, toys and such articles as they had perhaps used when living were left to mark more clearly their last resting-place.

Pagan ornament accounted for.

If these considerations suffice to convince us that the purpose of these objects was distinctive rather than religious, we shall not be surprised that so few traces of Christianity appear upon them. We know that St. Clement of Alexandria recommended Christians to adopt symbols reminding them of their faith on rings and other personal ornaments; but we cannot suppose that, in times of persecution, it would be possible for Christians in general to carry out this suggestion. They would naturally use the same articles of personal and domestic ornament or utility as their pagan neighbours, and would not necessarily cast away a valuable cameo because it had a mythological subject engraved upon it. And what they ordinarily used, they would naturally employ to mark the tomb of their dead. There is one noteworthy exception. We do not find among all the fragments of every kind of utensil any certain piece of a heathen idol, although pagan tombs and houses are full of such figures. The Acts of the *Quattro Coronati* who suffered under Diocletian show us the distinction, which was well understood by the early Christians, between mythological ornaments and idolatrous figures. The four Saints in question were sculptors by profession. They were accustomed to make fountains in the form of shells ornamented with figures of Victory and Cupids, *Victoriæ et Cupidines*. They were ordered to make a statue of Esculapius

to be placed in a temple. They refused, and this refusal was the occasion of their martyrdom. Mythological representations of the heavens, of the sea, and of rivers are found even in Christian sarcophagi of the fourth century. We need not therefore be surprised to find them on the objects affixed to Christian tombs, although it is somewhat startling to find a figure of Venus on a silver ornament bearing the acclamation: *Vivas in Christo.* A few years ago some small Egyptian idols were supposed to have been found in the Catacombs, but on closer examination they turned out to be figures of Lazarus in his grave-clothes coming out of the sepulchre.

Chronological value of these objects.

The purpose intended by the early Christians in thus marking their graves must, however, remain to some extent a matter of conjecture. But the testimony borne by these objects to the chronological period at which the *loculi* were used for burial is clear and certain. Whether we examine the consular dates on those epitaphs which contain them, or question the stamps of the Imperial potteries on the tiles which close the *loculi*, or whether we pass in review each class of objects that have been stuck into the plaster at the time of burial, from the valuable cameo or the emperor's medal to the smallest fragment of terra-cotta, the testimony is invariably one and the same. No object has ever been found in the *loculi* or *arcosolia* of the subterranean cemeteries which can be shown to be of a more modern date than the first ten years of the fifth century,—not even the lamps which might easily have been fixed in the walls after the cemeteries had ceased to be used for burial. On the other hand, the mass of articles of every kind of use or ornament belonging to the first three centuries is enormous, less numerous are those belonging to the age after Constantine, while indications of the sepulchres and relics of martyrs are by no means rare.

De Rossi, in his enumeration of the various classes of objects described in the three preceding chapters, takes care to keep steadily before us the probable date of each article,

and has devoted special attention to those objects that belong to the age of Constantine, and might seem to be assignable to a later date. But the more closely the examination is made, the stronger is the evidence that the general conclusions as above stated are correct. With his usual caution, the conscientious Roman archæologist admits that, in so vast a collection of objects, some may have escaped even his keen observation, and he adds: "Still less do I pretend that nothing will be noticed or discovered in time to come, which may seem to, or actually may form a partial exception to one or another of the leading observations which I have set forth and illustrated. In human affairs exceptions to rules must always be foreseen as possible, and sometimes even probable. But let present and future explorers of the Roman Catacombs, in the particular cases which they may stumble upon, apparently in contradiction to the great chronological system set forth and briefly summed up by me, let them examine with due attention the reality of the fact and all its circumstances, in order to determine whether the exceptional case be true and undoubted and whether (as often happens) as the schoolmen say, it be not *exceptio quæ firmat regulam*."

R. S., iii. 624.

CHAPTER IV.

THE BLOOD STAINED PHIALS FOUND IN THE CATACOMBS.

Blood of Martyrs carefully preserved—Often in vessels of glass and terra-cotta—These vessels often found in Catacombs by Boldetti, Marangoni, &c.—Remarkable case of liquid blood in a glass phial found in 1872—*Chemical and Microscopical analysis—Importance of this analysis—Testimony of F. Marchi, of Leibnitz—Decree of Sacred Congregation of Relics in* 1668—*Renewed in* 1863—*Vessels stained red with wine—P. de Büch's theory of Eucharistic or Agape wine untenable—Some* ampullæ *contained balsam—General Conclusion.*

Value attached to blood of Martyrs.

OF all the objects found in the Catacombs none have excited so much interest as the traces of the blood of the Martyrs. Pagan Rome is said in the Apocalypse to have been "drunk with the blood of the Saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus,"[1] and we have already adduced testimony to show how literally this was true.[2] More than one Roman Pontiff has responded to a request for relics by giving the petitioner a handful of the soil of Rome thus empurpled with their blood. Boldetti has drawn out at great length the proofs, from the Acts of the Martyrs, of the devotion with which the faithful braved every danger, in order to treasure up if possible every drop of that precious blood that was shed for Christ, and has shown how frequently the cloths steeped in it were buried in the grave with the martyr's body. Prudentius describes how the scattered remains of St. Hippolytus were carefully gathered up by the faithful, and how the very sand on which his blood had been sprinkled was taken up in napkins, "lest that [sacred] dew should remain on the profane dust. And if any of his blood had spurted out hot

[1] Apoc. xvii. 6.

[2] Part I., pp. 306–309.

upon stakes, a sponge was applied and took it all away."[1] Just as in another poem he describes how the faithful of Saragossa kissed with devotion the still bleeding wounds of St. Vincent, and how "multitudes stain their linen robes with his dripping blood, in order to preserve it in their homes as a sacred protection for their descendants."[2]

We have already described how the cloths steeped in the blood of the virgin martyr St. Cecilia were found in the sixteenth century in the same coffin with her still incorrupt body.[3] St. Gaudentius of Brescia teaches us that it was not merely ordinary devotion to the relics of the Saints that prompted the faithful thus to place the martyr's blood in his tomb: it was the most authentic record of his martyrdom. Speaking of St. Nazarius and others, he says: "We preserve their blood collected in gypsum, and require nothing more. We preserve their blood, which is the witness of their Passion."[4] And in the same way St. Ambrose says of SS. Gervasius and Protasius: "The tomb drips with blood, the triumphant marks of blood appear. . . . I found the appropriate signs; all the bones entire, and a great quantity of blood."[5] Boldetti says that he often found such blood-stained cloths in the Catacombs.[6]

Often preserved in vessels of glass or terra-cotta.

The sacred blood of the martyrs was not only preserved in sponges, cloths, and on the objects which had been sprinkled with it. The faithful often placed it in glass or terra-cotta vessels of different forms and sizes. Thus, in the account of the discovery of the relics of St. Marcian, who suffered under Hadrian at Tortona, by Bishop Innocentius in the middle of the fourth century, we read: "They found a glass vessel full

[1] Peristeph. xi.

[2] "Plerique vestem linteam
Stillante tingunt sanguine,
Tutamen ut sacrum suis
Domi reservent posteris."
—Peristeph. v. 341.

[3] Part I., 321.

[4] Serm. in Ded. Bas. SS. xl. Mm.

[5] Epist. lib. vii. ep. 54.

[6] *Op. cit.*, p. 149.

of his blood, and also the sponge with which the Blessed Secundus (himself a glorious martyr) collected his blood, and deposited it near his body."[1] Boldetti describes a bottle found by him in the Cemetery of Basilla or *Ad Clivum Cucumeris*, beneath the vineyard Pariola belonging to the Collegio Romano, affixed, as he says, to the grave of a martyr, and in the endeavour to detach it from the plaster the vessel broke, and inside of it was a sponge steeped in the martyr's blood. Boldetti gave this precious relic into the hands of Pope Clement XI. Nicephorus mentions the blood of St. Euphemia having been "taken up and divided in small glass vessels."[2] In 1675, in the works undertaken for the restoration of the High Altar in St. Maria ad Martyres, commonly called the Pantheon, there was found a leaden casket with the bodies of SS. Rassius and Anastasius translated from the Catacombs and deposited there by Boniface IV. On opening this casket, Cardinal di Carpegna found seven *ampullæ* of the blood of the martyrs with their relics, placed there (it is reasonable to suppose) in testimony of their martyrdom. Boldetti describes, among other relics which he was commissioned to examine, vessels of glass with blood in them. "In one *ampulla*," he says, "the blood was liquid and red, as if it had just issued fresh from a wound."[3] These relics came from Castello di Fiano about twelve miles from Rome.

See in Boldetti, p. 156.

These vessels often found in Catacombs.

These and other instances mentioned by Boldetti are confirmed by the testimony of Aringhi, Landucci, and Marangoni, who have all left descriptions of vessels of glass and terra-cotta, which they have examined with their own eyes, and in which the blood has been found still in a liquid state. Thus Marangoni writes: "In the lower part of the Cemetery of St. Saturninus we found a *loculus* closed with tiles, and distinguished outside by a small glass vessel stained with blood. When the tomb was opened, at the feet of the martyr was

[1] Acta SS. Martii, tom. i. 422.
[2] Hist. Eccl. xviii. 31.
[3] *Op. cit.*, p. 156.

found a glass *ampulla* of spherical form still more than half full of liquid blood so that the red part of the blood lay at the bottom, and the watery or serous part floated above it. When the *ampulla* was shaken, both parts were so mixed that the whole appeared blood, and after a time when allowed to

FIG. 124.—*Phials with traces of blood in them; from Boldetti.*

stand the white serous fluid again separated from the red blood. The neck and mouth of the *ampulla* appeared sprinkled all over with drops of blood, and the mouth was stopped with a little tufa stone also stained with blood."[1]

[1] Acta St. Victorini, p. 66.

Marangoni also found a similar *ampulla* containing liquid blood in the higher part of the same cemetery, and four years afterwards, in 1742, again in this part of the cemetery he came upon another "glass *ampulla* almost full of liquid blood, the upper portion of which was *serum*, and a yellow liquid at the bottom. It was placed in the midst of four *loculi*, in one of which were three bodies of martyrs. The neck was sprinkled all over with fresh blood (*vivo sanguine*)."[1] Marangoni had the good fortune to find the third and fourth *areæ* of this cemetery intact and unspoiled by previous explorers. In fact, in this same place was found, in 1872, an *ampulla* containing sanguineous matter, which has been subjected to the most careful and rigorous chemical and microscopic analysis. We propose to condense as closely as we can Cav. Michele De Rossi's account of this remarkable discovery.

Ampulla recently found with blood in it.

In the cemetery called by the name of St. Saturninus, beneath the Villa Potenziani, now the property of the King of Italy, about a mile out of Rome on the Via Salaria Nuova, some excavations were made in 1872, for the foundations of a new building, and the workmen dug down to the fourth and fifth *piano* of the Catacomb. Here they destroyed some hitherto intact *loculi*, in one of which they found a glass bottle $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches high containing a semi-liquid fluid looking like blood. The glass, of a greenish tint, but quite transparent, represented in the adjoining woodcut reduced one half, was in a state of very perfect preservation, and only oxidised at the bottom where it rested on the floor of the grave. This fact proves that the atmosphere of the spot must have been peculiarly dry and well-adapted for the preservation of anything left there. The workmen, out of curiosity to know the nature of the fluid, diluted it with water in which the blood speedily dis-

[2] Cod. Vatic. 8324, *e schedis Marangoni*. De Rossi reminds us of what St. Ambrose noticed in the tomb of the martyr Nazarius: *vidimus sanguinem martyris ita recentem, quasi eadem die fuisset effusus*.—Paulinus *in Vita St. Ambrosii*.

solved, and a few flies found their way into the flask. Eventually, the workmen brought the bottle to Father Tongiorgi, who communicated the discovery to the brothers De Rossi. The liquid was then submitted for microscopic examination to Count Francesco Castracane degli Antelminelli, conjointly with Doctor Domenico Colapietro for the chemica analysis. The observations were repeated frequently during three consecutive days, and Professor Gaetano Tancioni assisted at the examination, together with Michele De Rossi, who drew up the *procès verbal* of the result. It was the first time that a vessel from the Catacombs containing liquid had been found in a state capable of being submitted to so thorough a scientific examination. The result was as follows.

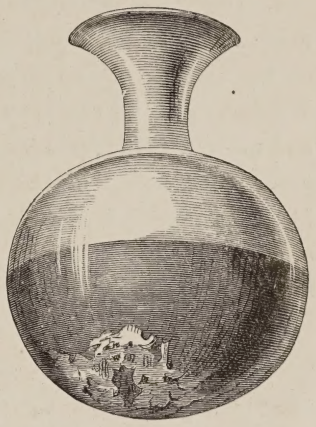


FIG. 125. *Glass Bott e containing blood, found in* 1872.

The Chemical Analysis.

1. The liquid, which fills about two-thirds of the glass, is of a blackish-red colour and very watery. It has the appearance of blood decomposed and much diluted in water. Left for some time quiet it is seen to form at the bottom a thick deposit, which has all the external characteristics of blood.

2. We took an ounce of this liquid and evaporated and dried it up, so as to form a shining solid pellicle: and this pellicle we exposed to a red heat in a platinum tube. It emitted an ammoniacal smoke, with a very strong smell of animal matter.

3. The same operation repeated on other portions of the liquid taken from the surface, the bottom, and the middle of the fluid, always manifested the same results. This repetition

was necessary to convince us that the above-mentioned vapour could not have been due to the presence of some of the flies which had got into the bottle.

4. To the pellicle mentioned in No. 2 we applied a drop of nitric acid, and the result was a complete reduction to ashes, during which we observed the development of a light vapour. We then dissolved the ashes in a solution of hydrochloric acid and water, and the result was a liquid, which with the addition of sulpho-cyanuret of potassium became the colour of red blood, as takes place in the solution of the salts of peroxide of iron.

5. The appearance of the reaction produced in proportion to the quantity of liquid analysed agrees exactly with the quantity of iron which ought to manifest itself in an equal quantity of blood.

6. From these chemical data we conclude that we had to do with a liquid of positively animal character, and which, by its physical appearance and by the quantity of iron contained in it, is clearly shown to be blood.

Microscopic Analysis.

1. Having searched to discover if there was any trace of sanguineous globules, we proved that the degree of decomposition to which the liquid had arrived was such that we could not discern any traces of such globules.

2. We noticed, however, that there were groups of very small prismatic crystalline forms, and though we could not determine the class of crystal by the nature of the liquid, yet they displayed the colloid character.

3. We observed the presence of little spores of different forms, and some light fragments of decomposed insects which could not have come from the flies which fell into the bottle; since these would have been decomposed and consumed by means of parasitical organisms, if account be taken of the

conditions favourable to a rapid and complete decomposition of their remains after so great a quantity of water had got in.

4. We saw that there were a number of little hairs perfect and with longitudinal channels, and exactly similar to a number of others which appeared still growing on the remains of skins of insects. These latter most probably must have been the remains of the worms and their chrysalises which lived on the putrefaction of the animal substances.

5. We observed on the sides of the phial a film of the appearance of blood, in which we saw entangled some threads of a textile fabric.

Conclusion.

Cav. M. De Rossi considers that this analysis has set at rest the question as to the possibility of organic substances being preserved in the Catacombs. The perfect integrity of the glass and the solubility of the red liquid in water has supplied us with an unique example of liquid not mingled with any mineral substance. From the chemical analysis has been clearly manifested the presence of iron in conjunction with liquid matter positively and essentially animal, a result which excludes every other part of animal organisation and includes the one part alone, viz., blood. Then the microscopic analysis, having revealed the colloid nature of the liquid itself, and the presence of animal remains from the putrefaction, has confirmed the organic nature of the said liquid. Again, the microscope has revealed the presence of textile filaments, and these at once remind us of the linen cloths with which we know the early Christians used to collect the blood of the martyrs. Of course, a thousand accidents might have caused these threads to be mixed with the blood in this *ampulla*. Still, their presence here is what we should have expected from the Acts of the Martyrs.

Importance of this analysis, as confirming testimony of Marangoni and Boldetti.

Our readers will at once perceive that the result of this complete analysis not only proves the presence of blood in this particular phial, but confirms the testimony of Marangoni and Boldetti as to the contents of similar phials found by them.

If no other substance but blood will satisfy the searching analysis to which modern science has subjected the contents of this phial, we cannot be accused of rashness in regarding the opinion of Marangoni and Boldetti concerning the contents of vessels examined by them as correct, even though they did not subject them to a scientific analysis. Boldetti describes the various kinds of *ampullæ* found by him in the Catacombs, and carefully distinguishes between the reddish colour, which the glass contracts by oxidation, and the red film of dried-up blood which he observed on many of these phials.[1]

Testimony of F. Marchi.

We have given special prominence to the analysis of the contents of the bottle found in 1872, because it is of a kind that will satisfy our readers that the tests of modern science have been fairly applied to at least one of these *ampullæ*. But it is impossible to read Boldetti without feeling persuaded that he is thoroughly to be trusted, when describing what he himself has seen, however little dependence may be placed on his deductions from the facts of which he was the witness. The same may be said of the late Father Marchi, a much more scientific antiquarian than Boldetti. He describes the surroundings of an *ampulla* found by him which leave no doubt of the grave in which it was sticking being that of at least one martyr. He says:—

"In Cyriaca, this year [1844] in March, we found a large grave near the pavement with an *ampulla*, still red with blood, fastened in the middle of it. In it two bodies lay side by side, but between their feet I found the upper joint of the thigh of a third, and between the shin-bones of the two I found the thigh, and between their knees the knee, and between their thigh-bones and ribs the shins and feet of the third. I could have wished those had been present who think themselves wise in contradicting the best-established traditions. The Roman Church holds the *ampulla* of blood

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 185.

to be a sign of martyrdom, not by force of any law or written document preserved in her codices or annals, but by force of an ever-living custom. . . . In like manner, in Sant' Agnese, I opened a *bisomus* of martyrs, and I found behind the heads of the two an amputated arm, showing that, when they could not recover the whole body, they buried the mutilated limbs."[1]

The celebrated Leibnitz describes the result of an examination made by him of a portion of one of these *ampullæ* in a letter to Fabretti: "I have examined the fragment of a glass phial, tinged with redness, brought me from the Cemetery of Callixtus, with the sole object of more readily ascertaining of what nature the redness is; and whether, in the language of modern physiologists, it is due to the animal or to the mineral kingdom. It occurred to me to try with a solution of sal-ammonia in common water whether anything could thus be separated from the glass, and taken off. This succeeded at once, and beyond all expectation. And hence the suspicion was justly excited in our minds that the matter was sanguineous, and not earthy or mineral; for the latter, by its corrosive power, would probably, in the course of so long a time, have gone down deeper into the glass, and would not so readily have yielded to the solution."[2] This examination falls far short of the analysis made in 1872, and scarcely merits the importance attached to it by Boldetti. It was easily set aside by the late learned Pére de Buch, S.J., whose work, *De Phialis Rubricatis*, has excited a somewhat sharp controversy, and provoked an indignant but far from convincing reply from Mgr. Scognamiglio. If the distinguished Bollandist had lived to read Michele de Rossi's account of the recent discovery, we are inclined to think he would have modified his opinion, and have been ready to admit that a greater number of these phials are really reddened with the blood of martyrs.

Leibnitz.

We have no intention of entering into the details of the

Decree of S. Cong. of Relics.

[1] Monumenti delle Arti, p. 118.

[2] Apud Fabrett. Inscr., c. 8.

controversy about these red-stained phials. Dr. Kraus, in the second edition of his German version of our work, has given a short history of the dispute, and has formulated his own conclusions. We prefer to imitate the reticence of the brothers De Rossi, and confine ourselves to the narration of ascertained facts. The Sacred Congregation of Holy Relics and Indulgences in a decree of April 10th 1668, declared: "Cum de notis disceptaretur, ex quibus veræ Sanctorum Martyrum reliquiæ a falsis et dubiis dignosci possint; eadem S. C., re diligentius examinatâ, censuit palmam et vas illorum sanguine tinctum pro signis certissimis habenda esse; aliorum vero signorum examen in aliud tempus rejecit—Whereas it was disputed about the marks by which true relics of the holy Martyrs may be distinguished from false and doubtful ones, the said Sacred Congregation has decided that a palm-branch and a vessel stained with their blood are to be held for most certain signs; but the examination of other signs it has deferred to another time." This decree has been re-published by the Sacred Congregation in 1863; and we have shown in the beginning of this chapter that the vessel of blood was, even as early as the fourth century, regarded as the most undeniable sign of a martyr's tomb.

Examples of vessels stained red but not with blood. *K.S.*, iii. 712.

It does not, however, follow that every vessel with red stains upon it is at once to be pronounced as reddened with blood. In the year 1872, a chemical analysis was made at the Greenwich Observatory of sixty fragments of ancient glass vessels with a reddish deposit upon them, and it was found that the red colour was in the substance of the glass and not on its surface, and was due to the oxide of iron resulting from the decomposition of the glass itself. And no doubt the redness on many other such vessels is due to the same cause. Still, the case described by Leibnitz proves that it would be rash to generalise too widely from the Greenwich experiments, especially as it is by no means clear that the sixty fragments there tested came from the Catacombs. The examination by

M. Paul Desaint, professor of the Sorbonne, of a glass vessel from the Catacombs attests the presence of organic matter.[1] The analysis made by the learned chemist Signor G. Bertassi of Milan of the *ampullæ* found in the tomb of SS. Gervasius and Protasius attests the same.

P. de Buch's theory of wine untenable.

It was suggested by Pére de Buch that the red substance found in these vessels was the remains of wine from the agapæ; or, possibly, Eucharistic wine corrupted and dried up. This hypothesis has recently received a certain additional appearance of probability from the analysis of the contents of an *ampulla* found in the Aliscamps at Arles in 1877, described by M. Berthelot in the *Revue Archéologique* for June in the same year. The chemical analysis proved the existence of alcohol, bi-tartrate of potash, acetic acid, tartrate of lime, and traces of acetic ether. The liquid was evidently wine, and, indeed, preserved still the smell of wine. The glass was much oxidised, but was hermetically sealed; and the liquid had a yellowish colour. The glass was of the Gallo-Roman period.

R. S., iii. 718.

A comparison of this account with the analysis of the contents of the phial found in St. Saturninus only shows the entire dissimilarity of the substances. One manifests all the characteristics of wine, and the other all those of blood. The history of the Church in Gaul proves that, among other abuses condemned by local councils, was that of burying the Holy Eucharist with the dead. Towards the end of the sixth century, the Council of Auxerre forbad this practice,[2] but this was long after burial had ceased in the Catacombs, as De Rossi pertinently remarks. No instance has come down to us of the Blood of our Lord being deposited in the grave, while we know from the writings of Tertullian and Origen that the most extreme care was taken in the early ages that no drop should fall from the chalice.[3] It is, therefore, impos-

R. S., iii. 500.

[1] De l'Epinois, Les Catacombes de Rome, p. 202.

[2] Conc. Antissiod., can. 12.

[3] "Calicis aut panis etiam nostri aliquid decuti in terram anxie patimur." —Tert. De Corona., c. 3; cf. Origen, Hom. xiii. in Exod.

sible to admit the supposition that these vessels, stuck in the plaster outside the graves, and exposed to all the accidents to which such a position rendered them liable, could have contained Eucharistic wine.

Theory of agapæ wine equally untenable.

No less untenable is the supposition that these *ampullæ* may have contained the remains of wine used at the agapæ. The fact is, there is no proof of the agapæ ever having been held underground. The buildings over the cemeteries, as we have shown, were the recognised places for these feasts; and the abuses which caused these feasts, and those afterwards celebrated at the *natalitia* of the Saints, to be abolished would equally have discredited the practice of preserving the wine at the martyrs' tombs, if such a practice had ever existed.

Some phials contained balsam.

It is, however, quite in keeping with the customs of the ancient Christians to suppose that some of these phials contained odoriferous oils and balsams, which were extensively used for honouring the faithful departed, sometimes by being placed in the tombs, and sometimes by being burned in lamps in front of the shrines. We have seen how carefully drops of these *olea* were carried away and preserved by the faithful as relics. But these phials are not to be confounded with those stained with blood.

Conclusion.

The general conclusion to be deduced from what has been set forth seems to be, that, although many difficulties remain to be cleared up by future discoveries, and more accurate scientific examination of the *ampullæ* that may be found in the Catacombs, yet no sufficient evidence has, as yet, been adduced to invalidate the principles upon which the Roman authorities have distinguished the tombs of martyrs from those of ordinary Christians. The *à priori* objections of Pére de Buch, grounded on the opinion of a Belgian chemist as to the impossibility of the preservation of organic remains under such circumstances, have been overthrown by the analysis to which we have given marked prominence. And although the piety of the faithful may be prone to believe a grave to be that of

a martyr on insufficient grounds, yet the most vigilant care is taken by the authorities to prevent such mistakes, and they do not hesitate to make use of all the light that modern archæology can throw upon the subject to aid them in their decisions.

APPENDIX.

Note A (page 4).

BLASPHEMOUS CARICATURE OF THE CRUCIFIXION.

Discovery of the caricature.

In the years 1846–1857 extensive excavations were made on the Palatine Hill at the expense of Nicholas, Emperor of Russia. Late in the autumn of 1856, four small square rooms were laid bare among the ruins of a very ancient building near a semi-circular *exedra* belonging to the palace of the Cæsars on the south-western slope of the hill, not far from the Church of St. Anastasia.

On the walls of these chambers were a number of *graffiti*, and amongst them the rude drawing, of which we give a copy in the following page. The portion of the plaster on which this had been drawn, was carefully detached from the wall and removed to the Museum of the Roman College under the superintendence of Padre Garrucci, S.J., who had been the first to discover it. He also wrote an article on the subject in the Civiltá Cattolica of 1857, in which he published a copy of the *graffito* and argued that it was meant to be a mock representation of our Blessed Lord, to whom some Christian was offering adoration, and that the inscription should be read ΑΛΕΞΑΜΕΝΟC CEBETE (for σεβεται) ΘΕΟΝ. "Alexamenus worships (his) God." He attributed the caricature to an early period of the third century, because that is precisely the time during which we have evidence that an insolent calumny was current among the heathen in Rome and in Africa, which might have given occasion to it. The very title of the sixteenth chapter of Tertullian's apology stands in some MSS. in these words: 'That Christians do not adore the head of an ass, as they cast in their teeth, but the true God and the sign of the Cross." And the opening of the chapter runs as follows: "You dream that the head of an ass is our God. The origin of this idea must be credited to Cornelius Tacitus, who, writing in the fifth Book of his Histories an account of the war against the Jews, took occasion to propound

Its interpretation.

his own theories as to the name and the religion of that people. He represents them as having been delivered—or rather, according to him, banished—out of Egypt, and distressed for want of water in the deserts of Arabia, when some wild asses happened to pass by, on their way to drink (as they supposed) after feeding.

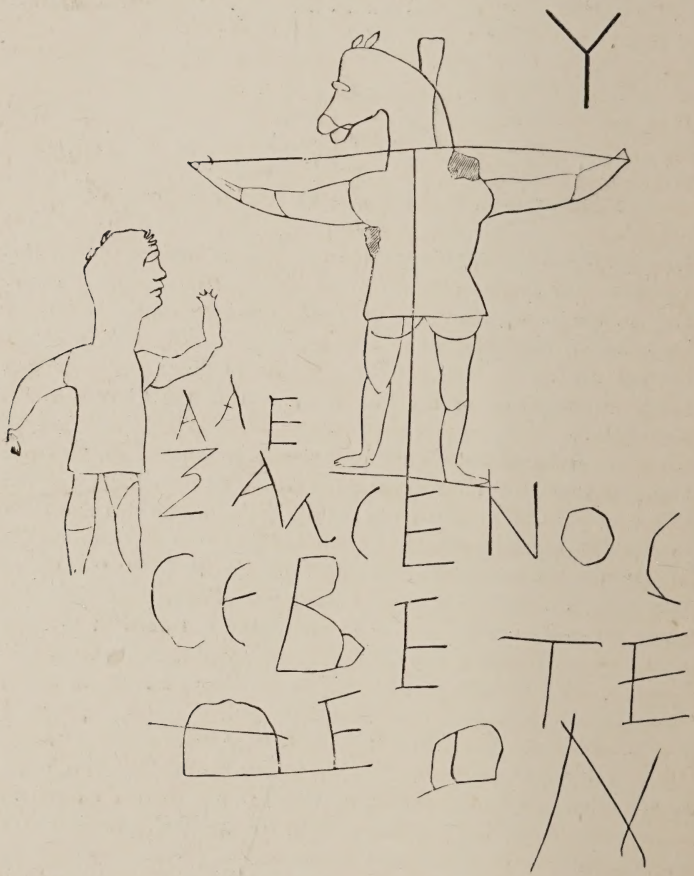


FIG. 126.—*Caricature of the Crucifixion, found on the Walls of a Chamber in the Palace of the Cæsars.*

Under their guidance they found a fountain; and in gratitude for so signal a benefit, ever afterwards counted sacred the likeness of that animal. And so I suppose, because we are near akin to the Jewish religion, they have borrowed the idea from this source, and credit us also with the same sacred rites."

Towards the end of the same chapter, he mentions another form in which this calumny was being circulated, and distinctly speaks of it as quite a recent thing. He says a painting had lately appeared in the city, consisting of a figure with the ears of an ass, and a hoof on one foot, dressed in a toga and carrying a book, with an inscription saying, "The God of the Christians ONOKOIHTHC." Another form of the same calumny

We do not venture to translate this word, because there are many different readings of it, suggesting or requiring different interpretations. According to the reading adopted by Liddell and Scott in their Lexicon, it means "lying in an ass's stall;" according to others, it means "begotten by an ass," or "having the hoofs of an ass," or "the head of an ass," or "the head and ears of an ass." Finally, Ochler, the learned editor of Tertullian, is very confident that the true reading is ONOKOIHTHC, and that the last part of the word is the verb κοιᾶται, which Hesychius interprets by ἱερᾶται, and from which Vossius derives the Latin *incohare*, in the sense of "to initiate any sacred rite." Hence he translates it as *Asinarius Sacerdos*, "a donkey priest."

We shall not pretend to make a selection for our readers between these various versions and interpretations; but we are sure they will thank us for setting before them the following copy of an antique gem, of whose history we are told nothing (according to the usual practice of antiquarians in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries), but which was published by its owner more than two hundred years ago,[1] and by him strangely misapplied to Apuleius and his Golden Ass. It can hardly be anything else than a copy of the very painting described by Tertullian, with which it is in almost literal agreement.[2]

exhibited in an ancient gem.

FIG. 127.—*An ancient gem, representing a donkey teaching; probably meant to ridicule Christianity.*

Garrucci cites passages from Plutarch and other heathen writers, who agree with Tacitus in attributing to the Jews the idolatrous worship of an ass's head; and one from Minucius Felix, showing that the same calumny was repeated against the Christians. "I hear," says the heathen disputant in that author's apologetic dialogue,[3] "I hear that for some foolish reason or other,

[1] Gemmæ antiquitus sculptæ a P. Stephanonio Vicentino collectæ et declarationibus illustratæ. Venet. 1646, tab. 30.

[2] Luke Holstein and others have long since pointed this out, correcting Stefanoni's mistake.

[3] Octavius, c. 9.

I know not what, you have a most disgraceful form of worship, worshipping the head of an ass."

The caricature proves the ancient use of the crucifix,

Finally, he points out the great importance of this *graffito* as the oldest representation of the Crucifixion now extant; and therefore giving valuable evidence as to the true shape of the Cross, and as to the private use by the faithful, even in those early times, of the figure of a crucifix. Certainly, it is difficult to guess what should have suggested such a representation as this, in mockery, unless it had been known that Christians were in the habit of thus honouring the crucifix in reality. The mere knowledge that the Christians worshipped a crucified Lord would not have sufficed; for persons who suffered death by crucifixion suffered naked, whereas this figure is clothed. And although it is not necessary to suppose that the author of the caricature knew the precise form of the cross on which our Lord suffered in Jerusalem, yet his representation, if it was not a copy in this particular from some original, must be taken as evidence of the ordinary shape of the cross when used as an instrument for the execution of malefactors in Rome. But these are matters into which we have no intention of entering here. The main point which Garrucci sought to establish was that the whole scene was meant to be a caricature of Christian worship, the figure being a blasphemous caricature of our Lord, and the man being engaged in the act of adoration described by Job as "kissing his hand with his mouth."[1]

and the Roman manner of crucifixion.

Another interpretation of the caricature

This explanation was received with great unanimity by the leading masters in antiquarian science, and illustrated with great learning by many of them, both in France, Italy, and Germany. In the last-named country a new explanation was first hazarded by Herr Haupt, Writer in the Imperial Court Library at Vienna, who attacked all the Christian archæologists of the day in terms of great arrogance, and maintained that the figure was no caricature at all, but intended in all seriousness as the representation of a man worshipping the heathen god Typhon. He read the inscription thus, ΑΛΕΞΑΜΕΝΟC CEBE TE (for σεβεῖ σε) ΘΕΟΝ, "Alexamenus worships thee as God," and considered that the Y which appears on the right of the crucified figure was meant for the second letter of the name of Typhon.

This extravagant proposition has since been used in support of the system which sees in the Christian symbols of the monogram and the Cross mere imitations of heathen forms, and in fact would fain obliterate all distinction between Christianity and Heathenism, seeking to make the former appear as a natural product of the latter. This is far too large and serious a question to be handled

[1] Job xxxi. 27.

in these pages. Neither is it at all necessary. For Herr Haupt's theory may be at once rejected as inadmissible for many other reasons. First, few persons, unless driven to it in order to maintain an hypothesis, will count it probable that any worshipper of any Deity would ever seriously represent himself in so ridiculous a form as this *graffito* sets before us. Secondly, there is no proof that the worship of Typhon existed in Rome at all; certainly none, that the idol received any real veneration; and the utmost that can be contended for is, that some sought to propitiate him as a malignant being. Thirdly, the Christian interpretation does much less violence to the actual form of the words than Herr Haupt's. It would be hard to justify his rendering of τε for σε, whereas students of Greek epigraphy are familiar with the substitution of ε for αι even as early as the days of Augustus. And it is much more likely that the Y is an unfinished scrawl by another hand, or even intended as another figure of the Cross, than that it should have been meant as an abbreviation of the word Typhon.

disproved by many arguments.

Bullettino, 1863, 35.

Moreover, the nature of the locality and the character of the surrounding *graffiti* make it in the highest degree improbable that any serious representation would have been scribbled here. The room was certainly either a guard-room of soldiers, or a schoolroom for boys. Near the mock crucifix is another *graffito*, of a mill being turned by an ass, with the inscription, *Labora Aselle quomodo ego laboravi et proderit tibi.* "Work, little donkey, as hard as I have worked, and it will be for your good." It has been thought that this had reference to soldiers relieving guard; but it is quite as appropriate in the mouth of a boy leaving school. Then the names of Mars, Fortuna, and Æsculapius, which occur on the walls, have been urged in favour of the military use of the room; but these too might very well have been invoked by schoolboys; and such inscriptions as the following, which are of frequent recurrence there, seem to us conclusive evidence in favour of the other theory. Of course it is quite possible that the room might have served both purposes at various times.

Bullettino, 1867, 75.

VERNA EXIT DE PE . . . OGIO APOLLONIVS
EVTYXES EXIT DE PAEDAGOGIO
CORINTHVS EXIT DE PEDAGOGIO
MARIANVS AFER EXIT DE PEDAGOGIV.

"Apollonius, Eutyches, Corinthus, Marianus, are leaving school."

Another name scribbled on the same wall is LIBANUS, after which is added by another hand EPISCOPUS, and lower down on the same wall, and apparently by the same hand, LIBANUS EPI.

Other ironical allusions to Christianity in the same place. *Bullettino*, 1863, 72.

De Rossi is disposed to read in these scribblings further indications of the same spirit of scoffing against the professors of the Christian religion, as dictated the caricature of the crucifix. He supposes some pagan schoolboy to attach the nickname of Bishop to one of his schoolfellows who may have filled the office of prefect, or been otherwise set in authority over him.

Early in the year 1870, a discovery was made by L. C. Visconti in another neighbouring room on the Palatine, of a *graffito* consisting of the words ΑΛΕΞΑΜΕΝΟC FIDELIS ; and it is obvious to conjecture that this was written by the very same Alexamenus whose religious exercises had been scoffed at by his companions in the first inscription, and who here makes a profession of his faith in the second. The title *fidelis* would probably not have been known or understood by any but the Christians themselves.[1]

As to the date of these *graffiti*, or rather of the caricature in particular, different periods have been assigned by different authors, from an early part of the second century to the middle of the third. All seem to be agreed that it cannot be put later than this. De Rossi sets it down as belonging to the time of Septimius Severus, A.D. 197–215, or not long afterwards.

Probable origin of the calumny which suggested the caricature.

A more interesting and important, and at the same time far more difficult question concerns the origin and history of the monstrous and insulting calumny which suggested it. One German author considers that it is due to the circumstances of our Lord's birth, and to representations of Him which had been seen, laid in a manger with an ox and an ass by His side. But we confess this seems to us wholly insufficient to account for it ; more especially as the reproach was inherited by the Christians (as we have seen) from the Jews, with whom the heathen for sometime persisted in identifying them. Oriental scholars are inclined to trace it to a blunder of the Egyptians, confounding the Jews with the Semites, amongst whom the worship of the ass really prevailed, or to a resemblance between one of the Jewish names for God and the Egyptian word for an ass.

Worship of an ass by some Pagans

Dr. Kraus however has pointed out that there were certainly some heretical sects in the early ages of the Church, in whose monstrous mixture of Christian dogma with heathenish superstitions some veneration of an ass seems to have found a place. The ass entered into the heathen mysteries of Bacchus, the festivals of Vesta, and some versions of the war of the Titans against the gods. It was even said that Bacchus had caused the ass on which he was carried, to speak with a human voice ; which reminds us of course of the ass that spoke to Balaam. Then

[1] See Epitaphs of the Catacombs, pp. 109, 125.

again, though it is impossible to trace the precise genealogy of many of the early heresies, and it would often be mere waste of time to attempt it, yet we cannot altogether lose sight of our Lord's triumphant entry into Jerusalem just before His Passion, riding upon an ass, nor forget that this had been made the subject of an express prophecy concerning Him, "Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold thy King cometh to thee, meek and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of her that is used to the yoke."[1] We need not enter into the details of the mystical explanation of this action that was given by the early Fathers. It will be enough to mention that they recognised in "her that had been used to the yoke" the people of Israel, the children of the Old Covenant, and in "the colt on which no man hath ever sitten," the Gentile world. The two together therefore were a type of the whole Church. Is this the key which will unlock the secret of the following, which we find as the reverse of a medal of Alexander the Great? We know from

and even some heretical sects.

FIG. 128.—*Medal of Alexander the Great, with its Reverse, showing an Ass and its Foal, with a Christian Inscription.*

St. Chrysostom[2] that there were Christians in his day who wore brass coins or medals of Alexander of Macedon on their heads or attached to their feet, and valued them highly as charms; and there is evidence that traces of this superstition still remained in Smyrna even as late as the beginning of the last century. And here we have a medal with the head of Alexander, clad apparently in a lion's skin,[3] on one side, and an ass with her foal on the other side, with the amazing inscription DN IHY XPS DEI FILIUS. "Our Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God."

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[1] Matt. xxi. 5. Zach. ix. 9. [2] Ad illum. Catech., Homil. ii. in fin.

[3] The most common type of the coins of Alexander was the head of Hercules with the lion's skin. It has been suggested by a learned friend whether this coin or medal may not have been produced under Christian auspices some time between 231 and 235, when the style on the coins of the Emperor Alexander Severus was IMP ALEXANDER PIUS AUG. In 221 he had taken the names of M. Aur. Alexander, and in 222, M. Aur. Severus Alexander. But when he had dropped all these names excepting that of Alexander, is it not possible that some members of the Christian Church, which had looked to him with so much hope, may have ventured

Dr. Kraus quotes a law of Honorius, A.D. 409. which condemns a sect of *cælicolæ*, whose superstition is said to be unheard of, but is not any further described. In its first and most obvious meaning, we should understand by *cælicolæ* worshippers of the heavenly host, sun, moon, and stars; but this superstition could hardly be called new and strange: it was probably one of the oldest of all. Dr. Kraus therefore suggests another reading *cillicolæ*, from κιλλος, an ass; and he produces a coin of Honorius, having on its reverse an ass and her foal, with the legend *Asina.* We learn from Epiphanius[1] that it was pretended by the Gnostics that the Jews worshipped a God Sabaot, who was "a man standing, but having the form of an ass."

Notices of Christianity in Pompeii. *Bullettino*, 1864, 72.

Finally, Dr. Kraus produces the ancient gem which we have already seen of two men listening respectfully to an ass who is clothed in a *pallium* or philosopher's cloak, with its right foot uplifted as though in the act of teaching, and he sets side by side with it the *graffito* found on the walls of a chamber in Pompeii, in which there is every reason to believe that Christians used to hold their assemblies. On the outside of the house is a warning to idle loiterers not to tarry there, for that this is no place for them (*Otiosis locus hic non est; discede morator*). And among the scribblings on the inner walls are, on the one hand, an exhortation to listen to the Christians (*Audi Christianos*), and, on the other, a contemptuous declaration that here "a mule teaches little flies." Of course it is possible that this may have some obscene or opprobrious signification which cannot now be ascertained; but, considered with reference to the place where it is found, it sounds like a coarse rendering of the same charge which the Apostle himself brought against certain teachers, that they "creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, who are led away with divers desires."[2]

For further particulars on this curious subject we must refer our readers to P. Garrucci's dissertation, *Il Crocifisso graffito in casa dei Cesari*, 1857, and Dr. Kraus' *Das Spottcrucifix vom Palatin und ein neuentdecktes graffito*, 1872, from which most of this article has been taken.

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to compliment him by representing him in the character of Alexander the Great, and then exhibited on the reverse of the medal the humility of the King of kings? Had it not been for the passage we have quoted from St. Chrysostom, we should have been tempted to adopt some such explanation as this.

[1] C. Gnost. Hæres. xxvi. [2] 2 Tim. iii. 6.

Note B (page 23).

A MITHRAIC BURIAL-PLACE CONNECTED WITH THE CATACOMB OF PRÆTEXTATUS.

Our readers must not allow themselves to be misled by the title of our note. It is only meant as a description of the place where the tombs and paintings of which we are going to speak may be seen. We do not suppose that any connection between the two burial-places was originally contemplated. Quite the reverse. But until De Rossi's promised maps and plans of the locality are published, we cannot venture to say how the connection was brought about. Judging from the much lower level of that part of the excavation in which the Mithraic paintings occur, and from the holes which may still be seen in the walls of the Christian gallery, and which were probably made to secure some efficient separation between the Catacomb and its unwelcome neighbour, we should be disposed to suspect that the Christian fossors unwittingly broke in upon the Pagan burial-place, after it had been abandoned by its original makers, and its precise site forgotten. Father Marchi considered that he had found other examples of accidents of this kind[1] in the Catacombs; and it was one that was specially likely to happen in the case of a sect like that of Mithras, which was finally suppressed and extinguished in Rome by the Prefect Gracchus, A.D. 376. If the galleries of the Catacombs which are in connection with this Pagan sepulchre belong to the latest period of their use as places of burial, this explanation would receive very strong confirmation. However, for the decision of this point, we must await, as we have said, a future publication of De Rossi's. In our present note we only propose to give some account of the paintings themselves which we have often seen, and of which M. Perret and Father Garrucci have published copies. The latter has also illustrated them by a very learned commentary, from which most of the following remarks are taken.[2]

Position of this burial place. *R.S.*, i. 92.

It has been mentioned in the text that Bottari was the first to publish them,[3] or rather to publish a very faulty and garbled copy of parts of them, and that he sought to give them a Christian interpretation. This formed one of the special supports of Raoul-Rochette's theory as to the character of primitive Christian art,

[1] Monum. dei Crist. Primitivi, p. 66.

[2] Tre Sepolcri con Pitture ed Iscrizioni appartenenti alle superstizioni Pagane del Bacco Sabazio, e del Persidico Mitra. Napoli. 1852.

[3] Sculture e Pitture Sacre, &c. Tom. iii. pp. 1, 188, 192, &c.

according to which the most disgraceful Pagan superstitions were sometimes used as Christian symbols. But with our present more intimate knowledge of the artistic monuments of the Catacombs, no one will be tempted to believe that the paintings we are about to describe are Christian.

Description of the paintings.

They form the ornamentation of an *arcosolium*, and together represent a continuous history; the history of a departed soul, as understood by those who caused them to be painted on this tomb. The first act of the drama, which occupies the lowest part of the vault on the right-hand side of the spectator, sets before us the departure of the deceased, a lady of the name of Vibia. She is borne away horizontally, robed, and with hair and arms hanging straight down to the ground, in the arms of a powerful man, or god, Pluto, who stands, crowned with laurel, in a chariot drawn by four horses. The horses are galloping at full speed, and Mercury, armed with his usual wand in one hand and holding with the other the rein at the mouth of one of the horses, is hurrying forward towards a large opening in the earth. The legend over their heads is ABREPTIO VIBIES ET DISCENSIO, "The carrying off of Vibia and her going down" (to Tartarus).

Then, in the centre of the vault, is a larger scene, occupied by a high tribunal on which are seated DIS PATER and ABRACURA, whilst on the ground on the left-hand side stand three figures, one male and two female, all dressed alike, with heads covered and downcast eyes, and who (we learn from the superinscription) are the Divine Fates (FATA DIVINA); and on the right-hand side Mercury (MERCURIUS NUNTIUS) introduces two females, resembling in dress and attitude the Divine Fates, but called respectively VIBIA and ALCESTIS. Alcestis was the very type of conjugal affection and fidelity. Dispater is of course only another name for Pluto, and Abracura must be the Mithraic substitute for Proserpine. Some have sought for the origin of this name in the Greek words which might signify "Delicate Maiden;" but considering the whole surroundings of the scene, we cannot doubt that it is only a feminine form of the same mystical name (formed out of the number 365) which we are familiar with in Abracax, or Abrasax, Abraxas, Abracadabara, &c.[1]

At the other extremity of the vault, *i.e.*, on the right-hand side, as a pendant to the *Abreptio Vibies*, is the representation of seven men seated at a *sigma* table, partaking of a repast. Eight loaves or rolls of bread lie on the table, and four dishes containing

[1] We cannot go into details on this subject, but must refer our readers to Irenæus, lib. i. c. xxiv. 6; Epiphanius, lib. i. Hær. iv. 16; St. Jerome, lib. i. adv. Jovinianum, et in c. 3 Amos. Arnobius adv. Gentes, lib. i.

respectively a fish, a fowl of some kind, some small animal (probably a hare), and pastry. Three of these men wear Phrygian caps, and over the head of one of these is written VINCENTIUS, whilst the legend that embraces them all, tells us they are seven pious priests, SEPTE PII SACERDOTES.

The flat surface at the back of the arch immediately over the grave is occupied by another feast, or rather by two scenes, of which a feast is the principal. In the right-hand corner is a subordinate or introductory scene, consisting of an arched doorway, under which stands Vibia, being led forward by a man who holds in his left hand a crown, whilst with his right he introduces the lady. This scene tells its own tale plainly enough; nevertheless the artist has added the words INDUCTIO VIBIES, or "Leading in of Vibia," upon the doorway, and ANGELUS BONUS over the head of the young man. Then at the feast Vibia herself is seated with the crown on her head, in the company of five other guests, men and women, most of whom are crowned, and all are said to have been approved of by the judgment of the good (BONORUM JUDICIO JUDICATI). A fish and a cake are already placed in dishes on the table; and one of three servants is bringing in a third dish containing a fowl, whilst two other servants are stooping or kneeling on the flower-covered meadow in the foreground, and an *amphora* (of wine) stands on a low triangular frame in the right-hand corner.

On the outer surface of the wall, the whole *arcosolium* is flanked by two tall upright plants, or rather a pattern of scroll-work made more or less in imitation of a plant, round the stem of which another plant is twined. And finally, on the same outer surface, but above the arch, we read a long Latin inscription, part of which has perished by the falling off of the plaster, and which is damaged in two other places by the holes already spoken of. Most of it, however, remains quite legible, and we learn from it that this is the place of burial of Vincentius, a priest of the god Sabazius, "who served God with a pious mind." It contains also an exhortation to the reader to eat and drink and enjoy sensual delights during life, for that this is all which a man will carry away with him out of this world, whither many have preceded him, and all will sooner or later follow.

VINCENTI HOC QUETES QUOT VIDES PLURES ME ANTECESSERUNT OMNES EXPECTO
MANDUCA VIBE LUDE BENI AT ME CUM VIBES BENEFAC HOC TECVM FERES
NUMINIS ANTISTES SABAZIS VINCENTIUS H (Q)UI SACRA SANCTA
DEUM MENTE PIA CO(LUIT).

It is conjectured that Vincentius was the husband of Vibia, and this gives the most satisfactory explanation of the whole series of paintings which have been described. The reader will have observed that Vincentius distinctly calls himself "a priest of the god Sabazius," who is mentioned also by Origen.[1]

Other similar paintings in the neighbourhood.

In two neighbouring tombs we have paintings less intelligible and an inscription less perfectly preserved, but they manifestly belong to some kindred superstition and are of the same sensual character. In these paintings a soldier appears three or four times; sometimes fully armed, sometimes less so, but always wearing his helmet. Once he is in company with a priest who holds aloft in his hands a dead lamb, as though offering it in sacrifice to five stars which appear just above. Once also he is kneeling on one knee behind a woman in the same attitude; but from the kind of crown which appears on her head we may suspect that she was a priestess; and probably the whole series has reference to certain scenes of initiation into the mysteries of Mithras, in which we know, both from Tertullian and St. Jerome,[2] that a soldier bore some part.

The central figure in one of these *arcosolia* is a naked Venus, turning her back on the spectators. She stands within a circle, outside which, in the corners of the square which encloses it, are the head of Oceanus, a parrot, a serpent, a peacock pecking at a vase of fruit and flowers, a dolphin, and a phœnix with its egg or ball of myrrh.

The inscription shows that one of these *arcosolia* was the tomb of one Marcus Aurelius. . . . S.D.S.I.M., *i.e.*, *Sacerdos Dei Solis Invicti Mithræ*, "Priest of the Sun, the invincible god Mithras;" a place which he had prepared for himself and his children; and it openly proclaims in his praise that he had provided all sorts of sensual enjoyments for his *alumni*, which in this connection has probably a semi-religious sense and expresses discipleship rather than its ordinary social signification. The words are QUI BASIA (V) OLUPTATEM JOCUM ALUMNIS SUIS DEDIT.

Note C (page 240).

THE GOOD SHEPHERD, CHRISTIAN AND PAGAN.

It may have occurred to some of our readers that the remarks which we made, in the second chapter of Book I. about the Good

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[1] C. Celsum, lib. i. c. 9.

[2] Tertul. de Coronâ. St. Jerome Ep. ad Lætam, tom. i. p. 672, ed. Vallarsi.

Shepherd, are inconsistent with the examples which we have given, in Book IV., of sarcophagi with this figure upon them, and which we stated were probably sculptured in Pagan shops. Those who have read Mr. Parker's book on "Tombs in and near Rome" cannot fail to have been struck by the beautiful copy which he gives (Plate XIX.) of a fresco in the tomb of Statilius Taurus (B.C. 30), representing a shepherd with three sheep around him. Both the animals and the human figure are drawn with perfect artistic taste, and there is nothing in the simple and graceful dress of the shepherd to suggest the remarks of De Rossi about the nakedness and want of gravity of Pagan representations of the Kriophorus. But then it is to be observed that this is a purely pastoral scene, and the remarks of De Rossi were confined to those frescoes where the shepherd is represented with the sheep on his shoulders, or where he is the principal figure in the composition. Here the shepherd is only one of a group in a series of subjects containing about ninety figures.

It may, however, be urged that none of the Good Shepherds sculptured on the sarcophagi answer to the description of De Rossi, or resemble the Kriophorus on page 28. They are all of a grave character and decently clothed, and yet we have admitted that many of them were executed by Pagan sculptors. (See Figures 91, 93, and 94.) To this we reply that although the figure of the Good Shepherd was not unknown to Pagan art, yet it was by no means a favourite subject. De Rossi does not hesitate to say : *R.S.*, ii. 353.
"It is clear that the predilection of Christians for the image of the Shepherd was the cause of the multiplication of its sculptured repetition on sepulchral coffins. Hence we see the fashion of these scenes to have prevailed on sarcophagi of every kind in the third century, when the Good Shepherd had been for some time the favourite figure on Christian monuments ; and the greater number of such sarcophagi adorned with these scenes we find precisely in Christian cemeteries. I do not even know one example of the sculpture of the *Pastor Kriophorus* in a Pagan sepulchre, although I have no difficulty in believing that one has been or might be found. In 1846 a *Columbarium* was excavated between the Via Appia and Via Latina, near the Porta Appia, in the pavement of which there was represented in mosaic the Rape of Proserpine. I saw there in its place a sarcophagus of bad workmanship, and on one end of it was sculptured the shepherd, with the pipe in his hand, between three sheep. But on searching among the ashes of the burned bodies in the *ollæ*, some small plates of lead were found with Basilidian inscriptions ; a certain indication of the Gnostic sect, to whom this sepulchre belonged." It is easy to understand

how the makers of sarcophagi, finding a particular type of pastoral scene much sought after, would reproduce that type in such a manner as to be pleasing to their customers, without being aware of the meaning which the latter attached to it.

Among the sarcophagi photographed by Simelli, and reproduced by Mr. Parker (Plate XVII. n. 2), is one representing a vine, from which a number of *putti* are gathering grapes, and treading them out in the press below, others are tending and milking sheep. But in the centre and at each end of the sarcophagus is a large figure of the Good Shepherd standing on a pedestal, with a sheep on his shoulders, and a pastoral crook in his hand. There is nothing to show that this sarcophagus could not have been sculptured by a Pagan artist, and yet the meaning of the whole to a Christian is unmistakable, and it may be taken as an example of the modifications which Christian ideas produced on the original type of the Kriophorus.

Note D (page 118).

ANECDOTE ILLUSTRATING DE ROSSI'S INTIMATE KNOWLEDGE OF THE CHRONOLOGY OF THE CATACOMBS.

It may be worth while to preserve the anecdote, as it was told, not very long after the event, by one who had it from an eye-witness.

"I forget the precise date of the re-discovery of the Catacomb of Prætextatus, or at least of the staircase which leads down to it, on the left-hand side of the Via Appia, nearly opposite the famous Catacomb of San Callisto. A gallery had been found leading out of the staircase about half-way down, and the openings of a few other galleries at the foot of the staircase had been cleared of their rubbish; but as yet no inscriptions of any value had been recovered; none with a consular date, whereby to fix the chronology. De Rossi had formed his own conjectures, or rather, I should say, had come to a very positive conclusion on this subject; but it was founded on analogy, and on a hundred signs and tokens which he had noticed, but which would have escaped any ordinary observer, and would not have been appreciated by him, even if he had seen them. One evening the corporal of the excavators, returning from his day's labour, and reporting progress to his master, said they

had found an epitaph to-day, and it had the name of a Consul on it, but only one ; and that one was—Aurelius, let us say, or any other name that is of frequent occurrence in the Consular Fasti—for I have forgotten the real name, and our corporal too had forgotten the *prænomen ;* whether it was Titus, or Marcus, or Lucius, or what other he couldn't say. "Where did you find it?" "At the bottom of the staircase." "Very well ; I'll come out and see it to-morrow, and don't you touch it till I come." The corporal being dismissed, our antiquarian betook himself to his books and papers ; and at the end of half an hour or more announced to a friend sitting in his room, "That consul must be such a one, and the inscription belongs to the year ——; but it can't have been found at the bottom of the staircase. It must have come from that gallery which opens out of the staircase, on the right hand you go down." The friend remonstrated at what seemed the absolute wildness of such conjectures ; to trust his own deductions from books without having seen the stone, and, in one particular at least, *against* the testimony of those who had seen it ! How could he possibly select the one Aurelius that was meant out of the five and twenty that *might* have been meant? and then his verdict as to its position, it was monstrous ! much learning had made him mad. "Come and see," was the only rejoinder ; and the invitation was gladly accepted. Early the following morning, the two friends stood at the bottom of the long steep staircase which dives into the Catacomb of Prætextatus, and there at their feet lay the stone with the precious inscription. "Read it for yourself," said the antiquarian, not condescending to stoop and see the verification of his own announcement. "The *prænomen* is Titus, isn't it?" "Well it is certainly ; there's no denying it. But, anyhow, you're wrong as to its position ; here it lies, just where we were told." "Stop a minute as to that. Corporal, where was that stone found?" "There, Signore, just where you are standing." "Did you find it yourself?" "No, Signore." "Who did then?" "Pasquale." "Pasquale, where did you find that stone?" "Please, Signore, I dug it out of that gallery up there to the left, as you go up the stairs ; but I and Valentino brought it down here out of the way, because we were afraid we should break it with our pickaxes." The look of triumph in the antiquarian may be easily imagined ; and in due course of time he vouchsafed to explain the process of reasoning by which he had been led to his conclusion."[1]

[1] The Rambler, July 1860, pp. 219, 220.

Note E (page 228).

TREATMENT OF PAGAN ART UNDER THE CHRISTIAN EMPERORS.

The subject of this new work of M. Allard's is too intimately connected with that of the present volume not to call for some special mention. It has only appeared whilst these pages were passing through the press; otherwise we should have been glad to avail ourselves of some of the facts which it contains. The work is strictly historical, and contains a faithful enumeration of all the laws which were passed by the Christian emperors concerning the heathen temples and statues, and also of all the facts which concern them, that are recorded by ecclesiastical historians or in the Lives of the Saints. These do not always strictly correspond with the laws, and the causes of the discrepancy are carefully examined in each instance. The general character of the conclusion to which M. Allard's historical inquiries have led him may be sufficiently gathered from the opening remarks of his preface. "There are two ways," he says, "of understanding progress. To some persons it is a violent power which crushes every obstacle, at the risk of confounding in one and the same ruin abuses which it is necessary to destroy, and institutions which it would have been sufficient to reform. To others, it is a power of sweetness and patience, which avoids making unnecessary havoc, which transforms without destroying, or at least abstains from destroying anything which is capable of being transformed. Progress of this kind leaves behind it only the recollection of a benefit received and the trace of many blessings. Christian progress founded upon the Gospel is of this latter kind; it wears the character of that divine moderation without which nothing durable is ever established."

M. Allard has already, in another work, demonstrated the truth of this statement with reference to the Church's action for the abolition of slavery, and in the present volume he shows that the same spirit of moderation presided over her treatment of the monuments of the idolatrous worship of the heathen. Our readers will probably accept this statement with considerable surprise; it is so contrary to the generally received account of the matter. Most writers have re-echoed the assertions of M. Vasari, who in his Lives of the Painters attributes the decay of the fine arts in ancient times to the indiscreet and excessive zeal of the Christians, whose desire to annihilate every memorial of Paganism led them (he says), "to destroy not only the wonderful statues, sculptures, paintings, mosaics, and other ornaments of the false gods, but even

the images of famous men with which the public squares were decorated." And this charge has become one of the stock arguments of modern infidels, who seek to represent religion as the sworn enemy of civilisation.

The careful student will find ample materials in M. Allard's pages for a refutation of this calumny. He makes it clear that the same religious moderation and the same love of the fine arts of which we have seen a proof in Pope Damasus (vol. i. p. 203), characterised the general action of the Church and the legislation of the best Christian emperors. Of course he does not deny that some heathen temples and festivals were interfered with by Christian authority, and others again by the fanaticism of the people; but he shows that this was the exception, and not the rule, and he explains the reasons of these exceptions. But for these and all other details we must refer our readers to the pages of M. Allard himself, in which our readers cannot fail to be interested. He was led to investigate the subject by De Rossi's frequent and important references to it; indeed, like so many other Christian archæologists of the present day, he has only worked a rich vein of ore, for the discovery and due appreciation of which we are all indebted to De Rossi.

Note F (pages 221 and 256).

By an oversight not noticed until it was too late to correct it, different interpretations of the same kneeling female figure sculptured on the end of a sarcophagus have been given in different parts of the work. The fact was, that one of the Editors, to whom the Book on the Sarcophagi had been entrusted, reproduced the interpretation given in the First Edition, which identified the female figure with St. Mary Magdalene, and did not notice that his *confrère* had followed the interpretation of Count de St. Laurent, who considers it to be the Hæmorrhoissa. It would seem from the *Bullettino* (1871, p. 87; 1872, p. 82) that De Rossi adopts the latter interpretation. We must leave our readers to choose between the two.

INDEX.

ABRAHAM offering up Isaac, in painting, 97; on sculpture, 251, 254, 259; on bronze, 284; on glasses, 305, 318.

Agapæ, 126, 128, 254, 287, 306, 342; inventory of articles used at, 287.

Agnes St., on gilded glasses, 305, 312 (see *Cemetery*).

Alexandria, Catacomb paintings of, 71, 72.

ΑΛΕΞΑΜΕΝΟΣ, Alexamenus, 348, 350.

Allard, M., on Pagan art under Christian emperors, 360.

Allegorical sense of Scripture, 45.

Ampullæ found in Catacombs, 293; of various forms, 294; containing blood, 332, 333, 335, 338, 339; containing wine, 341; containing balsam, 342.

ANNI SER, pottery mark of Christian manufacture in second century, 292.

Annunciation, painting of, 142.

Apamea, coins of, representing Noe, 107.

Apostles (see *Peter and Paul*).

ARCADIA IN PACE, 158, 160.

Arles, sarcophagi found at, 237.

Art, Early Christian: its antiquity, 3–16 (see *Painting*, and *Sculpture*).

Articles found in Catacombs, 266–343; purpose for which they were placed there, 325–327; their chronological value, 328.

Ass teaching, on gem, 347.

Augustine, St., on interpretation of symbols, 49; on feast of disciples at Sea of Galilee, 68, 69; on portraits of Christ, 216; on Feast of SS. Peter and Paul at Rome, 306; on Apostolic See as fountain of doctrine, 316.

BAPTISM of Christ, 132, 260.

Baptism, sacrament of, symbolised, 60.

Basket, Blessed Sacrament carried in, 66.

Blind, Christ giving sight to the, 244.

Blood of Martyrs carefully preserved, 330, 331; in glass or terra-cotta vessels, 332.

Blood-stained phials found in Catacombs, 330–343; described by Boldetti, 332; Marangoni, 333, 334; Padre Marchi, 338; Michele de Rossi, 335; chemical analysis of, 335; microscopic analysis of, 336; conclusions from, 337; Leibnitz on, 339; P. de Büch on, 339, 341; Decree of S. Cong. of Rites on, 340.

Boldetti on precious stones found in Catacombs, 268; on rings, 269; on ivories, 277; on bronzes, 283; on medallion of SS. Peter and Paul, 285; on gilded glasses, 299; on Martyrs' blood, 331; on blood-stained phials, 332.

Bosio on articles of gold in Catacombs, 281.

Bronze articles in Catacombs, 282, 285.

Büch, P. de, S.J., *De Phialis Rubricatis*, 339, 341, 342.

Bullæ, 269, 283, 284.

Buonarroti on cameos in Catacombs, 267, 268; bronzes, 282, 283; medals, 290; glasses, 299, 300; on purpose of these articles being placed there, 325.

Burgon, Dr., on Catacomb paintings, 11, 18; on sarcophagi, 262.

CAIN and Abel, in sculpture, 250.
Calliculæ, 194, 195, 210.
Callixtus, St., figure of, on glass, 305 (see *Cemetery*).
Calocerus and Parthenius, probable painting of, 118.
Cameos found in Catacombs, 267, 268.
Carpegna, Cardinal : his museum, 267, 268, 282.
Cecilia, St., painting of, 209 ; Head of Christ in crypt of, 223.
Cemetery Ad Duas Lauros, 227, 283.
——— of St. Agnes, painting in, 227; discoveries in, 275, 276, 294.
——— Ad Clivum Cucumeris, 332.
——— of St. Callixtus, sacramental chambers in, 85–99, 154 ; paintings in, 19, 53, 54, 65–67, 81, 86, 87, 91, 97, 99, 100, 108, 132, 133, 151, 154, 157, 158, 162–167, 174, 175, 178–180, 183, 198, 201, 203, 207–209, 213, 223 ; sarcophagi in, 232, 238, 239, 240 ; objects found in, 270, 272, 277, 279, 281, 285, 289, 291.
——— of St. Cyriaca, 191–194, 277, 338.
——— of St. Domitilla, paintings in, 31, 33, 120–131, 169, 195, 196, 218, 219, 227 ; excellence of, 131 ; sarcophagi in, 234 ; objects found in, 283, 292.
——— of Generosa, 177, 211, 326.
——— of Hermes, 168.
——— of the Jordani, 156.
——— of Marcellinus and Peter, 129, 130, 170, 204, 235.
——— of SS. Nereus and Achilleus (see *Domitilla*).
——— Ostrianum (see *St. Agnes*).
——— of Pontianus, 214, 224.
——— of Prætextatus, difficulties of obtaining access to, 144 ; paintings in, 138–143, 226 ; sarcophagus in, 241 ; objects found in, 267, 268.
——— of St. Saturninus, 282, 284 ; blood-stained phials found in, 332, 334.
——— of St. Soteris, 162, 200, 201.
Chair, ivory pommel of, 279.
Chalices, glass, 321–323.
Chanot, M., on contrast between Christian and Pagan Good Shepherd, 30.
Children, Three : in painting, 113, 114, 168, 201 ; in sculpture, 260 ; in glasses, 320.
Christ, paintings of, 132, 198, 214–224 ; portraits of, 216, 217 ; ivory medallion of, 222 ; sculptures of, 221, 244, 251 ; in glory, 256 ; entry into Jerusalem, 260 (see *Monogram*, and *Symbol*).
Christian Art, Early : its antiquity, 3–16 ; its relations with Pagan art, 37, 38, 360 ; more mixed with Pagan art after Constantine than before, 35, 230 (see *Painting*, *Sculpture*, and *Symbol*).
Chronology of Paintings : Mr. Parker's mistakes about, 110, 111 ; De Rossi's rules for determining, 117–119 ; summary of, 229–231.
——— of sarcophagi, 233.
——— of articles found in Catacombs, 267, 281, 328, 329.
——— of gilded glasses, 301, 302.
Chrysostom, St., on decorations of a Basilica, 207.
Church symbolised by a ship, 82 ; by a woman, 95, 96, 135, 136, 317 ; a lamb, 171 ; Noe's ark, 105 ; a house, 249, 317.
Cinque Santi, chamber of, 157–160 ; who they were, 161.
Clemente, San, paintings in, 215, 228 ; statue found in, 248.
Clement, St., of Alexandria, on Orpheus, 32, 242, 292 ; on the Fish, 62 ; on the Sirens, 240 ; on rings, 327.
Cochet, Abbé, on Gallo-Roman and Merovingian pottery, 294, 295.
Cœlicolæ, sect of, 352.
Coins found in Catacombs, 289 ; of various emperors, 289 ; none later than Decentius, 290.
Cologne, glass *patenæ* found at, 320, 324.
Cornelius and Cyprian, SS., painting of, 212.
Corona, Holy Eucharist as, 250, 322, 323.
Creation of Eve, in sculpture, 243.
Cross, disguised paintings of, 165, 184 ; sign of victory, 185 ; various forms of, 186 ; floriated, 203 ; in sculpture, 254.
Crowning with Thorns, the, in painting, 146 ; in sculpture, 254.
Crucifix, blasphemous, found on Palatine, 346–352.

Cupid and Psyche, in painting, 33; in sculpture, 239.
Cyrinus, painting of, 208.

D'AGINCOURT, on Christian and Pagan art, 6.
Dalmatics used by matrons in time of Aurelian, 161.
Daniel in lions' den, type of Resurrection, in painting, 20, 112, 113, 123, 133; in sculpture, 247, 253; on glasses, 318, 320.
David, type of Christ, 78.
Decree of S. Congregation of Relics, on blood-stained phials, 340.
De donis Dei, 214, 215.
De Rossi, Commendatore, on antiquity of paintings in Catacombs, 9, 11, 13; his judgment endorsed by Mommsen, 12; on Good Shepherd, 26; on Shepherd on Pagan sarcophagus, 357; on relation between Christian and Pagan art, 37, 38; on date of paintings in "sacramental chambers," 118, 120; on the Paralytic, 92; on three classes of Feasts, 126–128; on Holy Trinity in sculpture, 243; on marbles in Catacombs, 275; found cameo in Catacombs, 268; ivories, 277, 278; bronzes, 285; coins and medals, 290; glasses, 300; traces of martyrdom, 296; on medallion of Apostles, 310; on chronological value of objects found, 329; on caricature of crucifix, 350; on inscriptions, anecdote of, 358, 359.
De Rossi, Michele, Cav., on glass bottle containing blood, 334–337.
Detlefsen on glass phials, 287.
Diocletian, inventory of articles confiscated by, 287.
Dionysas and Zoe, painting of, 119, 157–159.
Dionysius vas Christi, 83.
Diptychs, consular, 279.
Dolphin, type of Christ, 60, 80, 81.
Domestic utensils in Catacombs, 274–289.
Domitilla (see *Cemetery*).
Donatist accusations, 288.

Ecclesia ex gentibus, &c., 96, 137, 317.
Elias going up to heaven, in sculpture, 257.
Elvira, Council of, on pictures, 4.
Epiphanius, St., on worship of the ass, 352.
Epiphany, The (see *Magi*).
Eucharist, Holy, symbolised by Fish, and Bread, and Wine, 66, 132; Fish and Bread on table, 67, 125, 129; Feast by Sea of Tiberias, 67–70, 97; multiplication of loaves and fishes, 65, 71, 72, 245; these symbols familiar to early Christians, 73–75; symbolised by milk, 75–80; by priest at tripod altar, 93; by sacrifice of Isaac, 97, 98; Daniel fed by Habacuc, 247; *corona* in sheeps' mouths, 250.
Eusebius, St., Pope, ceiling in crypt of, 175.
Exuperius, Bishop of Toulouse, St. Jerome on, 66.

FALL, the, in sculpture, 244, 250; on glasses, 304, 320.
Family group, painting of, 162.
Faustinianus, epitaph of, with symbols, 53.
Feasts, various kinds of, in painting, 124, 126–130, 181.
FELICIO CAECIDEL E VIVAS, 291.
Fish, worn as medal, 64, 270; in sculpture, 249, 280 (see *Symbol*).
Fossors, among the clergy, 287; paintings of, 101.

GARRUCCI, Father, S.J., on Paralytic, 92; on painting of Christ's Baptism, 147; on sculpture of Holy Trinity, 243; on gilded glasses, 299, 324; on blasphemous crucifix, 345–348; on Mithraic paintings, 353.
Glass, articles formed of, in Catacombs, 284; bowl found in St. Callixtus, 285; at Trêves, 286; phials, 286; glass chalices, 321; *patenæ*, 320, 322–324.
Glasses, gilded, 298–324; description of, 299; manufacture of, 300; date of, 301; subjects on, 302–305; SS. Peter and Paul on, 305–319.
Gold articles not found in Catacombs, 282.
Good Shepherd, paintings of, 20, 133, 175, 177; composition of, 178; a favourite subject, 23–25; not from Pagan models, 25; De Rossi on, 26, 27; M. Chanot on, 30; Pagan paintings of, 357; Pagan statues of, 26–30; Christian statues of, 29, 248; on Pagan

sarcophagi, 239, 240, 249, 358; on Christian sarcophagi, 241, 250.
Graves, Dr., on paintings of Feasts, 127.

HÆMORRHOISSA, the, in painting, 145–147; in sculpture, 221, 222.
Heaphy, Mr., on portrait of Christ, 219, 220.
Hemans, Mr. Isidore, on the sacramental character of Catacomb paintings, 42.
Hippolytus, St.; his statue, 262, 263; his Paschal Canon, 262, 264; quoted, 239.

IDOLS not found in Catacombs, 283.
Ignatius, St., of Antioch, quoted, 323.
Inventory of articles used at *agapæ*, 287.
Isaac, sacrifice of (see *Abraham*).
Ivories found in Catacombs, 277; covers of diptychs, 278; pommel of chair, 279; carved finial, 280; medallion of Christ, 281.

JANUARIUS, St., chamber of, 148.
Jerome, St., on the Fish, 64; on Holy Eucharist in a basket, 66; on Feast of SS. Peter and Paul, 306; on Jonas' ivy or gourd, 110.
Jewish symbols on gilded glasses, 302.
Job, history of, in sculpture, 260.
Jonas, history of, in painting, 99, 100, 109, 133, 150, 156; under gourd, *not* ivy, chronological significance of this, 110; probable origin of form of his fish, 111; his ship, 154, 155; in sculpture, 249.
Jordan, the, in sculpture, 257; on glasses, 317.
Joseph, St., in painting, 142.
Junius Bassus, sarcophagus of, 259–261.

KALENDAR of St. Hippolytus, 264.
Kraus, Dr., on blood-stained phials, 340; on worship of the ass, 350, 352.
Kriophorus, figure of, 27, 28, 30, 357, 358.
Kügler, on Catacomb paintings, 16, 18; their symbolic character, 39; inadequate idea of, 45; on portrait of Christ, 218.

LABARUM, the, 186, 203, 253, 269, 271, 275, 276.
Lamb, the symbol of Christ, 204, 261, 316, 317; of Christians, 250, 260, 317.
Lamps found in Catacombs, 290; bronze and terra-cotta in great numbers, 291; with Christian symbols, 292; with Pagan symbols, 293; bronze, Christian, found at Porto, 36.
Lateran Museum, sarcophagi in, 232, 242–261.
Laurent, Count de St., on symbolism of Catacomb paintings, 43, 361; on *nimbus*, 187, 188.
Lazarus, raising of, in painting, 98, 99, 115, 116, 207; in sculpture, 245, 249, 251; on glasses, 304, 319, 320.
Leibnitz on blood-stained phial, 339.
Leo III., St., Pope: his decorations at tomb of St. Cornelius, 212, 213.
Liberian region of St. Callixtus, 198.
Liber Pontificalis, 322.
Lindsay, Lord, on Catacomb paintings, 16.
Linus, St., Pope: his sarcophagus, 234.
Loculus a kind of sarcophagus, 233.
Lollianus, labels of, 274.
Longlianus, sarcophagus of, 238.
Lucina, Crypts of, paintings in, 131–138; sarcophagi in, 238, 240; ivory found in, 279.

MACARIUS, St., on Peter succeeding Moses, 315.
Magi, adoration of the, in painting, 169, 170; in sculpture, 244, 258; on glasses, 321.
Mahaffy, Professor, on interpretation of ancient characters, 48.
Manna, gathering of, in painting, 193.
Marangoni, MS. of, in Oscott College, 281; on blood of Martyrs, 332.
Marble decorations in Catacombs, 275, 276.
Marcellinus, painting of, 204 (see *Cemetery*).
Marchi, Father, S.J., found large ivory finger in St. Cyriaca, 277; on proofs of martyrdom, 338; on Mithraic tombs, 353.

Margaret, epitaph of, 201.
Maria Virgo Minester de tempulo Gerosale, 136.
Marriage represented on glasses, 302.
Martyr, trial of, in painting, 173; welcoming deceased to heaven, 195, 196, 198.
Mary, B. Virgin, 135; symbol of Church, 136; with Divine Infant, 138–140, 226, 227.
Mary Magdalene, St., in sculpture, 251.
Mass, Sacrifice of the, symbolised, 93, 98.
Maximus of Turin, on Fish, 59; on miracles of loaves, and water changed into wine, 73; on Samaritan woman, 147; on St. Peter as Moses, 180; on devotion to Saints' relics, 195.
Medals found in Catacombs, 284, 289; of Alexander the Great, with Christian inscription, 351.
Minucius Felix on Christian dress, 94.
Mithraic burial-place, 353; paintings, 353, 356; misunderstood by Raoul Rochette, 22, 353.
Mommsen, Professor, on De Rossi, 12.
Monogram of Christ, earliest painting of, 183; various forms of, 186, 187; painting of, as a star, 193, 197, 198; in sculpture, 253, 276; on lamps, 292, 293; on casket with Pagan subjects, 36.
Moses taking off his shoes, 108, 180; striking the rock, in painting, 108, 115, 150; in sculpture, 246, 249, 253; on glasses, 314; the symbol of St. Peter, 315, 319.
Müller on Catacomb paintings, 16, 37.

NATIVITY, the, in painting, 139, 226; in sculpture, 235, 258.
Neapolitan Catacombs, paintings in, 225.
Necklaces found in Catacombs, 269.
Niebuhr on ancient art, 17.
Nimbus, use of, by Pagans, 188; by Christians, 189; in fourth century, 189, 198, 227; in fifth, 190, 205.
Noe in ark, in painting, 105–107, 124; in sculpture, 249.

OBJECTS found in Catacombs, 266–297.
Olea from shrines of Saints carefully preserved, 290, 342.
Olivieri on proofs of martyrdom, 296.
Optatus, St., on Fish, 63.
ONOKOIHTHC, 347.
Orante, 200; alternated with Good Shepherd, 133–137; sometimes the Church, 134; sometimes the B. Virgin, 135; sometimes private individual, 136.
Origen on Fish, 63.
Ornamental patterns, 203.
Orpheus, type of Christ, 31, 32; in painting, 31; in sculpture, 242; in Christian mosaic, 32.

PACATA, 241.
Pacian, St., on Penance, 92.
Pagan art, treatment of, by Christian emperors, 360, 361.
Paintings, Christian, coeval with excavation of the Catacombs, 14; better appreciated now than formerly, 16, 18; De Rossi on, 37, 38, 45; symbolical character of, 39–49; Biblical, not historical, 43, but symbolical, 45; limited number of subjects, 44; rules for interpretation of, 47, 48.
——— symbolical, 50–83.
——— Liturgical, 84–103.
——— Biblical, 104–116.
——— of first and second centuries, 120–150.
——— of third century, 153–175.
——— of fourth century, 151; singular, in Liberian region, 198.
——— of fifth and sixth centuries, 152, 206–231.
——— of seventh century, 210, 211.
——— of eighth and ninth centuries, 212.
Paintings, specimens of, 19, 31, 33, 53, 54, 75, 76, 81, 87, 100, 105, 121, 123, 124, 129, 130, 132, 139, 145, 146, 148, 149, 151, 154, 156, 158, 162, 163, 164, 165, 166, 167, 168, 179, 170, 171, 175, 177, 179, 180, 183, 191, 193, 196, 198, 201, 203, 204, 207, 208, 209, 211, 213, 214, 218, 219, 223, 224, 226, 227 (see also Plates XII., XIII., XIV., XV., XVI., XVII., XVIII., XIX.).
——— on canvas, 167.
——— Mithraic, 353–356.
Pallium, dress of philosophers and

priests, 35, 93, 101; of prophet Isaias, 139; of Elias, 257, 258; of Christ, 210, 211; Tertullian on, 94; St. Cyprian on, 94; forbidden by Council of Gangra, 94.
Palmer, the late Mr. W., 246, 312, 316.
Papa Romanus, 212.
Paralytic carrying his bed, symbol of Baptism or Penance, 91, 92; in painting, 86, 87; in sculpture, 251; on glasses, 304.
Parker, Mr. J. H., misrepresents De Rossi on Catacomb paintings, 7, 8; his own mistakes, 8; his photographs of paintings often caricatures, 15; his mistake about Jonas, 110; about paintings of Feasts, 129; about paintings in Prætextatus, 144, 145; about the date of gilded glasses, 302; he correctly interprets Moses as St. Peter, 315; his beautiful photograph of Pagan shepherd, 357.
Parthenius and Calocerus, 118.
Paschal Canon (see *Hippolytus*).
Pastor on fresco in Generosa, 177.
Paul I., St., Pope, painting of, 212.
Paulina, sarcophagus of, 241.
Paulinus of Nola, St., 15, 59, 83; on pilgrims at shrine of St. Felix, 307; on St. Peter and the Rock, 317.
Paul, St., Basilica of, sarcophagi from, 243, 251.
Perpetua, St., vision of, 76, 160.
Peter, St., denial of, foretold, in painting, 193; in sculpture, 245, 251, 256.
——— apprehension of, in sculpture, 246, 249, 252, 253, 259; reason of representing, 315.
Peter, St., as Moses, in painting, 180; in sculpture, 246, 253, 256, 259, 313–319; on glasses, 308, 311, 312, 317.
Peter and Paul, SS., in sculpture, 256; portraits of, 285, 308–312; on bronze medallion, 310; Feast of, 306.
Petronilla, St., painting of, 195, 196; her sarcophagus, 234.
Phaleræ, 267.
Phials (see *Blood*, and *Glass*).
Pictures, early Christian use of, 5.
Pie Zeses, 304, 308.
Pliny on decline of art, 17.
Podogoritza, glass plate from, 318.
Policamus, painting of, 208.
Pollecla, epitaph of, 166.
Pompeii and Catacomb paintings compared, 18; notices of Christianity in, 352.
Portraits of Christ, 214, 225; of the Apostles, 308–312.
Pottery found in Catacombs, 287, 288, 292–294; Gallo-Roman, 295; Merovingian, 295.
Prætextatus (see *Cemetery*).
Priscilla, St. (see *Cemetery*).
Prosper Africanus on Fish, 70.
Prosper Aquitanus on Fish, 63.
Psyche, in Christian painting, 33; in sculpture, 239.

Quattro Coronati, Christian sculptors, 237, 327.

Raoul Rochette on early Christian art, 6, 7, 17; its use of Pagan models, 21, 22; on portraits of Christ and Apostles, 225; on articles found in Catacombs, and their purpose, 326.
Ravenna, vine ornament at, 152.
Rénan, M., false statements of, 34.
Richemont, Count de, 5.
Rings found in Catacombs, 269.
Roman Church symbolised by SS. Peter and Paul, 312.

Sabazius, 356.
Sacraments, chamber of, 86, 87, 154.
S.D.S.I.M., 356.
Samaritan woman, 101, 145, 147.
Sarcophagi, Christian, 232; in Apostolic age, 233, 234; earliest dated, 235; makers of, 236; at Arles, 237; Pagan, used by Christians, 237–241; sarcophagus still containing body, 240; of Orpheus, 242; in Lateran Museum, 252–265; large, 242; of Primitiva, 248; from St. Paul's, 242, 251, 252; with figures of Passion, 253; of Junius Bassus, 259, 260.
Sculpture, Christian, almost confined to sarcophagi, 232; tardy development of, 235; difficulties of, in times of persecution, 236, 237.
Seasons, the, in Christian painting, 34, 149, 163.
Sebastian, St., painting of, 208.
Severa, dated inscription of, 157.
Severano on articles found in Catacombs, 325.

Severus the Deacon, 157.
Ship, symbol of, 82, 154.
Sibylline verses, 61.
Silver articles rarely found in Catacombs, 282.
Siricius, St., Pope, inscription of, 275, 276.
Sixtus, St., painting of, 213.
Slaves, labels for, 273; M. Allard on, 360.
Soteris, St. (see *Cemetery*).
SPES IN DEO, 288.
Spoleto, sarcophagus at, 237.
Stag, symbol of, 81.
Statilius Taurus, shepherd in tomb of, 357.
Statues, Christian, 29, 248, 262, 263.
Stones, precious, found in Catacombs, 267, 268, 274.
Susanna, as lamb between wolves, 171, 172.
Symbolism, Christian and Pagan, 35, 36; of ancient Christian art, 43; key to, 41, 42; St. Clement of Alexandria on, 39; St. Augustine on, 49; to be interpreted by written testimony, 47; and comparison with other monuments, 48; gradually gave place to literalism, 103, 155, 164, 181.
Symbols, natural and conventional, 51; varied at different periods, 102; of seasons, &c., 34; of Baptism and Holy Eucharist, 41.
Symbols, various:—
Amphora or Vase, type of the body, 83.
Anchor, 52, 53.
Ark of Noe, 106.
Dolphin, 80, 81.
Dove, 52–55, 82; in first six centuries, 56.
Fish, when used, 57; why adopted, 58; symbol of Christian, 59, 60; of Christ, 61–64; seldom used alone, 64; with Bread, symbol of Eucharist, 65–75, 125–130; never in Pagan paintings, 125; interpreted by the Fathers, 59; especially by Tertullian, 60.
Lamb or Sheep, 52, 53, 260, 261.
Phœnix, 56, 318.
Ship, symbol of the Church, 82, 154, 155.
Stag, soul athirst for God, 81.
Water, 88, 89.

TERRA-COTTA found in Catacombs, 287; plates, 288; lamps, 291.
Tertullian on Pope as Good Shepherd, 47; on symbols of Baptism, 88, 89; on *Pallium*, 94.
Tesseræ, 271–273.
Theophilus, Emperor, 216.
Tobias and the Fish, 63.
Torture, instruments of, in Catacombs, 296.
Trench, Archbishop, on symbol of Fish, 59, 60.
Trinity, Holy, in sculpture, 243.
Tyrwhitt, Rev. St. John, on use of pictures in churches, 10, 11; on decline of symbolism in vine, 151, 152.

ULYSSES and Sirens, 240.
Urban I., St., Pope, prescribed silver chalices, 322.
Urbino, sarcophagus at, 236.

VASARI on indiscreet zeal of Christians, 360.
Vase Arretine, 288.
Vatican, Christian Museum in, 268, 273, 274, 280, 281, 283, 294, 298.
Vegetables, tomb of seller of, 166.
Veneranda, painting of, 195.
Venus with Christian symbols, 37; in Mithraic painting, 356.
Vibia, Mithraic paintings of, 354, 355.
Vincentius, 354, 355.
Vine, painting of, 121, 122, 148–152.
Virgins, wise and foolish, 191, 192.
Vitreæ diatretæ, 286.

WATER as a symbol, Tertullian on, 88, 89; St. Cyprian on, 90.
Well, symbol of doctrine, 101.
Wilmowsky, Canon von: his discovery at Trêves, 286.
Wilshere, Mr.; his collection of gilded glasses, 298, 303.
Woman, symbol of Church, 95.

ZEPHYRINUS, St., Pope, 101; his glass *patenæ*, 322, 323.
ZOE IN PACE, 158, 161.

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